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CULTURE OF A CONTEMPORARY RURAL COMMUNITY

El Cerrito, New Mexico

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by Olen Leonard and C. P. Loomis

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FOREWORD

This is a report on one of six communities which were studied contemporaneously by six different participant observers or field workers during the year 1939. Each study was sufficiently independent of the other five to warrant, in fact make desirable, separate treatment and publication The reader however, will gain full understanding of the findings only when he has read the six studies as a group.

The six communities selected for study - El Cerrito, New Mexico, Sublette Kansas, Irwin, Iowa, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Landaff, New Hampshire and Harmony, Georgia - were not selected in an attempt to obtain a geographic sampling of contemporary rural American communities but as samples of, or points on, a continuum from high community stability to great instability. At one end of the continuum, an Amish community Lancaster, Pennsylvania, was selected. At the other end of the continuum a "Dust Bowl" community in Kansas was selected The other four communities, for one reason or another, range themselves between these extremes El Cerrito is a stable community culturally, in fact almost a cultural island It has, however, suffered severely because it has lost a large portion of the land which supported it and because it is poorly equipped with technologies to meet the competition of other producing areas.

Something approaching commonalty of observations was attempted by all field observers in that a basic manual of instructions was available to, and used by, all of them Each observer, however, had wide latitude in making his observations and pretty free rein in writing up his findings.

A seventh report in this series will present the complete methodology used in the six studies and a body of generalizations which grows out of the combined observations of all who participated in the studies.

Olen Leonard lived 5 months, and Charles Loomis 3 months, in the village of El Cerrito. Both of these observers speak Spanish, and to a considerable extent became members of the community during the period of the study.

Carl C. Taylor,

EL CERRITO PEOPLE, LAND, AND CULTURE

Many villages in San Miguel County, N. Mex. seldom see an "Anglo." When one does appear, it is generally taken for granted that the visitor is representing some relief agency from the city. Such visits do not seriously interrupt the placid routine of everyday life. Investigators are anticipated, and so are the questions and answers that accompany the interrogation. But when a strange Anglo arrives asking for board and room, that is quite another matter. When he offers a more definite and tangible purpose for being there than to write something in the nature of a local history, the results are downright confusing.

Gaining entrance into such a situation was not easy. It was with noticeable reluctance that a family finally consented to house the stranger, although the money he offered for this service was obviously an inducement. It was difficult for them to believe that an Anglo could be interested in their village, as such, or in their culture. Experience and repeated stories had conditioned them to fear that acceptance of the "Americano" was likely to result in loss and deprivation.

So, during the first month of the investigator s stay in the village, he was a constant subject for conversation and speculation. Some accused him of being a detective and others of working as an agent for big stock companies. It was only the most trusting that voiced opinions that he was not there for some purpose detrimental to the interests of the group.

After a month of carefully guarded speech and action, the consensus of opinion slowly began to change. Some became willing, and often eager, informants, especially about the more objective aspects of the village. It was only as a result of patiently cultivated friendships that they came to talk at all frankly of their more personal affairs.

It was not difficult to get these people to talk of their history and conquest of the land. They are proud of their heritage, of forefathers who dared an unfriendly environment and hostile Indians to establish themselves on the land. The old-timers still live in the past and are always willing to oblige an interested listener with tales of large herds of stock owned or tended and of daring freighting trips to the East. It is more difficult to persuade them to carry the story on into contemporary life, for the second half of the story is an account of sure and steady loss against new and encroaching conditions. It entails admission of defeat in a new struggle - that of defending early gains against a new people and a new culture, usually recognized as superior in its ability to accumulate, absorb, and expand.

In selecting a village in San Miguel County for intensive study an attempt was made to find one typical of as large an area as possible and one that had, in a measure, retained its individuality in the face of the changing conditions that confront them all. Three distinct types were available; one of the scattered villages of the mountains; a dry-land farming village; and the more common type, one located along the river. After a brief reconnaissance of the area and numerous discussions with persons working over the county, the latter type was finally selected, although either of the other types would probably have been equally acceptable. The same problems and characteristics are found in all. Actually the native villages of San Miguel County are strikingly similar. Inclination and topography have combined to distribute the people into scattered groups that, because of resulting isolation, have become highly integrated socially. Living so completely within themselves, these groups have acted as safety vaults for the preservation of old customs and traditions. Change has come slowly where entry by an outside force is so reluctantly allowed.

The physical structure of these villages varies little. Houses are grouped closely together around a church, a school, and perhaps a store. None are farther separated than the distance across the plaza. Many are joined in long rows stretching along the sides of the plaza square. Away from the cluster no more houses appear until the next village is reached.

The village of El Cerrito is 30 miles southwest of the town of Las Vegas. Sixteen of these miles are over first-class pavement, three over a semi-improved surface, with the remainder only a very rough and often-changed entrance to the village itself. It is well hidden from the outside world. Only one familiar with the area or equipped with detailed instructions would be able to find it without patient searching or striking good fortune. One comes upon the village suddenly. Driving over the high mesa covered with juniper and scrub pine, the road abruptly rises, turns sharply to the right, and a panoramic view of the entire village and valley land lies ahead. Still over a mile beyond and below, the houses stand out in quiet relief against the far side of the valley wall. The little fields stretch out in rectangular pattern, clearly bounded by rock or the more modern barbed wire fence. Approached in winter the village seems as quiet and lifeless as the little cemetery just above it.

The exotic appearance of the village strikes one with singular force. Here is a bit of rural life far removed from the modern everyday world. Intuitively one sees that there is little here of the material goods that are designed to make living less arduous.

As one approaches still closer to the cluster of houses, almost the full length of the little irrigation ditch that brings the water from the river to the homes and numerous fields can be seen. This ditch is an engineering feat done without the aid or benefit of modern science. Its style of construction and the height of the banks built by annual cleanings give ample testimony of its age. For it was probably first constructed by the Indians, predecessors of the present inhabitants of the village, who taught the "bearded white men" much of what they still know and practice regarding earning a living in the New World. Modern machinery and the science of agricultural production have little influence here. It is rather a combination of indigenous and Old World folklore modified by the wits and ingenuity of the people.

FIG. 1. *The brush and rock dam raises the water to the mouths of the lateral above the village now as it has for many generations.*

El Cerrito is on the Pecos River in one of the many land pockets formed at irregular intervals where the valley widens out sufficiently to allow space for a few houses and a little bottom land. The valley land has never been sufficient in extent to allow full-time farming, but has constituted an indispensable basis of operations for the more extensive enterprises of dry-land farming and stock raising. Usually the individual family owned a tract large enough to grow a garden and enough feed crops to maintain a horse or two, a cow, and perhaps a pig. The principal source of income was livestock, which with few restrictions, roamed the surrounding mesa. It provided profits, even riches, for the owners and labor for those who had only their services.

Today, in northwest central New Mexico, these same people and their descendants have lost practically all their once vast holdings. Almost all that remain are the small, inadequate, irrigated holdings that were never sufficient in size and capacity to support a family. The outlying mesa, which actually supported the livestock industry, has been transferred to other hands. Huge tracts of land that were granted to them

by the Spanish and Mexican Governments have been sold to pay delinquent taxes or squandered by ruthless grant trustees. Also, courts frequently failed to recognize the validity of claims to these grant lands. El Cerrito is a part of an early Spanish Grant that contained over 400,000 acres. In 1901 the Court of Private Land Claims denied all but a little more than 5,000 acres. Not only did the people lose their land in this case but also much of their tangible property went for lawyers' fees to plead their case. Another local case, and one more typical of the area, is the Anton Chico Grant which borders the village of El Cerrito and to which an El Cerrito family once had rights. The history of this grant, according to the records of the Soil Conservation Service is as follows:

"The Anton Chico Grant was originally made to a community of 36 persons by the Mexican Government in 1822. As confirmed by the United States Government in 1860 it contained 278,000 acres. At the present time there are 700 descendants and heirs of the original grantees. The grant is owned in community by the heirs and is administered by a Grant Board of 5 persons elected by them. Land contained within the grant is subject to the regular property taxes of the State of New Mexico. At a very early date delinquency in payment of taxes became very serious.

"In 1926 the tax laws of the State of New Mexico were revised, making land subject to foreclosure by the State after taxes were delinquent 3 years. Starting in that year, sections of the grant were sold to outsiders in large tracts to pay the delinquent taxes, with the result that at the present time (1939) only 85,000 of the original 278,000 acres remain in community ownership. Of the 85,000 acres, 22,000 are leased to outside commercial livestock operators under 5-year leases at 8 cents per acre. Thus only 63,000 acres are now actually available for community use. At this date the Grant Board is considering sale of 3,000 acres more to secure enough money to pay currently delinquent taxes."

The cases cited are amazingly similar to many others over the entire State. In the words of one of the natives: "The people here are worse off than they ever have been in their lives. There is no wage work for them any more and the farms have become too small to earn a living from. People here could still earn a living if they had more grazing land. Farming is out of the question here as this land (mesa) is good for grazing only. I can remember when almost all the people here had flocks of sheep and a few cattle. My father and all my uncles had flocks of sheep, big ones. There was plenty of land then, free land, to graze them on. It's pretty bad. I don't know what we are going to do."

Although the process of losing this land began several decades ago, the disastrous consequences that finally resulted have been recent. Large tracts of land were being bought and leased during, and before, the 1880's but the people were little concerned. The railroads were building their tracks over the mountains and paying wages far higher than those offered by local sheepmen and cattlemen. Ties upon which the steel rails were laid were in demand at a good price. A man could earn more money cutting and selling ties to the railroad companies in a week than he could earn herding sheep for several months. Nor did the era of prosperity cease when the tracks were completed. Big farmers and labor scouts from the North came into New Mexico soliciting workers for the beet fields and metal works. Old timers say that they were able to choose their work and, within certain limits, to name the price.

FIG. 2. *A village deprived of its grazing lands does not repair adobe stables and storage space.*

The era of prosperity lasted well into the 1920's. Not until 1928 did conditions become so grave that people began to doubt that better times would soon return. By this time large numbers were without work and the reserves from better days had long been liquidated. After 1930 little hope remained of obtaining outside labor and a wholesale retreat began back to the villages and their land. Although it was generally realized that the small tracts of land remaining in their possession were inadequate these tracts afforded a house and garden spot that would help cushion the shock from the collapse of practically all demand for their labor.

It was not until the families were again more dependent on their land that full realization came as to what had happened when day wages were better. All free or grazing land was gone. Large concerns had bought, fenced, and posted huge areas from which it was forbidden that the people should remove even wood for fuel. Land that had not been bought or leased had been homesteaded in such a crazy-quilt fashion that its use had practically been destroyed. A man might own a section of land only 2 or 3 miles away by the most direct route but because of new fences it would be necessary to travel 10 miles to reach it. Homesteads that were more accessible were apt to be useless because of lack of water. The new concerns had been thorough in taking over water sources which, in turn, meant control of the surrounding area. In total, the natives realized that they had allowed themselves to be led into a situation from which there was no retreat. There was no longer any alternative but work or aid from the outside.

The Federal Emergency Relief Program provided the first straw at which these people could grasp. Shortly after its initiation the new county offices were filled with destitute villagers asking for work, clothing, and food, and San Miguel County became one of the most heavily subsidized in the State.

After 7 years of such subsidy the basic conditions in the rural villages of San Miguel County remain largely unchanged. Although new agencies have been set up to deal with the problem and the functions of the old ones have been broadened, they are yet doing essentially what the early relief agencies began, namely, passing out the little extra in the form of work or material goods that enables the people to keep "body and soul together." Agricultural programs now existing were not designed to meet the peculiar problems that exist here. Farm programs proposed to rehabilitate farmers on their present units are likely to do more harm than good under local conditions. No self-liquidating loan is feasible for a tract of land one-half acre in extent. The only alternative for the existing agencies seems to be to stretch the functions of their programs as far as possible toward meeting the problem. Essentially, this has meant grants or outright contributions of funds.

Among the people of this area today is found a growing feeling of futility; a general sense of inability to cope with circumstances as they exist. Although a few of the families are trying to farm outlying tracts of dry land, these ventures are meeting with scant success. All too often a promising crop in the early part of the season is killed by subsequent drought and literally blown from the field. If they are fortunate enough to obtain adequate moisture there is the constant threat of hailstorms. Frequently, natural forces may completely destroy in a single afternoon a season's patient labor. So it is always with doubt and misgiving that the people speak of dry farming. It is a deep conviction of all that farming the mesa land will never be successful unless some means is devised to provide irrigation water. This would be a task of herculean proportions even if the rough and thin mesa soil would justify it. Although

the people often speak of this as a possible project it is without enthusiasm. It is obviously a thought conceived in desperation and nurtured as a last hope in the face of ever-increasing frustration.

Under such conditions why have so many remained in the village? Why is it that within the last 15 years only two families have moved away with little thought of returning? Of the large proportion of the men who have traveled over surrounding States, working and searching for work, why have so few failed to return? These answers do not lie in the direction of security and availability of employment. Practically all of the men admit that financially they would have been better off had they remained away. The answers lie much deeper. They must be sought among such subtle factors as the attitudes and values of the people, the importance of community and religion, the integration and solidarity of the family, and the place of the individual in it all.

In the search for answers to these questions the first clue comes from the composition of the people themselves. They are a distinct racial group, speaking their own language and tenaciously clinging to old custom and tradition. They are ill at ease with the Anglo, who has never held an exalted opinion of a culture differing from his own. Because of antipathy toward them they are driven closely into their own group for appreciation and self expression. When one of the men is away from the village working he is usually among Anglos who regard him as a stranger and he thinks of himself as being among a strange people. He is willing to live and work away from the village mainly because of the thought that in a few weeks, a few months, or at most a year or two, he will again be able to return to his home.

The desire and the expectation to return to the village have been the principal reasons why the families have tenaciously held on to their meager possessions in the village. Such possessions represent a home to which they may always return when the harvest or spring planting has been done. Families are willing to endure great sacrifice and deprivation that their village holdings may be retained. A mortgage or lien is seldom found on one of these tracts of irrigated land. A villager may mortgage or sell patented land on the mesa, but only the most pressing needs will force a family to chance losing its home and holdings in the valley. The irrigated land is usually located near the house and is definitely a part of what the family thinks of as home. It was originally grant land and has been handed down for three or four generations. It is land that the father feels obligated to bequeath to sons and daughters, always divided equally, for here there is no knowledge or practice of primogeniture. Age and sex inherit alike, although it is generally recognized that the male members of the family may buy their sisters' shares if they are financially able to do so.

This practice of subdivision has naturally been greatly abused in an area where original units were much too small. Today most of the holdings are no longer easy to express in such broad terms as acres, but in yards measured along the river. This practice of measuring along the bank of the river has resulted in long and narrow fields, often no more than a few yards in width.

The irrigated land is held almost entirely by residents of the village. The absentee landowners are largely women who have left after marrying into one of the neighboring villages. Such land is usually tended by some member of the family with little thought or arrangement for the payment of rent. None of the irrigated land is owned by Anglos. It is not unusual for a tract of valley land to be handed down with

the stipulation that it shall never be sold or transferred except to a member of the immediate family. This is not true of the dry land which may be, and often is, sold to outsiders.

The physical structure of the community is also a significant factor in the integration and stability of the village. The houses are compactly located to form the perimeter of a circle with barns and corrals in the rear. Although such an arrangement interferes with efficient farming it greatly facilitates living. The house is farther from fields and pastures but is closer to school, church, and neighbors. Such proximity of living has developed a sociability and an integration of group life that would be difficult, if not impossible, to duplicate in any other type of arrangement. Seldom does a day pass when a farmer does not converse with a number of his neighbors. Children are seen playing together after the chores are done both night and morning. Childhood associations are almost as close between playmates as between members of the same family. They grow up to know each other almost as well as if they had been reared under the same roof.

The sense of community is strong with these people. Individuals are identified as much by the community in which they live as by family name. To be born into a community is to inherit an identification with it that is never forgotten. The few families from El Cerrito who are living away always refer to the village as their home. The reputation of the home village fixes to a certain extent the general status of a resident. The esteem for an individual is measured largely by the general opinion of the village as a whole. Loyalties to the community and to its people amount almost to a passion. It is not uncommon to hear someone speak in derogatory terms of a neighboring community or its people, but seldom does he dare breathe criticism of his own community or of its residents.

Few families in El Cerrito cannot claim at least a third cousin relationship to every other family. Thus the community is bound together not only by bonds of community relationships, but by blood ties as well. Marriage within the village has been common. It is only within recent years that close degrees of kinship have become so general that young people are forced to go outside their settlement for a mate. Existing statutes prohibit marriage between couples related as closely as second cousins. Although the church may sanction and thus bring about such a marriage, these cases are becoming comparatively rare. Many of the rural priests make it a point in their educational program to teach the undesirability, physically and morally, of close intermarriage.

The influence of religion and the church on these people is profound. All are devout Catholics. Evidence of this is found in their thinking, in their attitudes and values, and in their day-to-day activities. Services are attended regularly and in a humble spirit. Fees are paid promptly and special contributions are made periodically if meagerly. Although little money may be available for food and clothing, a way is always found to obtain candles to be burned for special occasions or a new costume for a child's first communion. The women are especially devout. It is they who carry the major burden in conducting services. When special services are held in the church some of the men are likely to remain away, but seldom a woman. Only in case of severe illness or similar misfortune will her conscience permit failure to attend.

The church is by far the best kept building in the village. Willing hands are always available should it need repairs or a new coat of whitewash. Despite the fact that the priest, who lives in a neighboring village, is able to visit the church only once each month, services are held regularly each week and innumerable other times during the year. There are 3 months during which services are held from one to three times each day.

Holy days are rigidly observed and Ascension Week receives special consideration and compliance. No work is done on these days because of the general knowledge that serious punishment would surely be meted out to the offender. The stories that tell of violations and subsequent retributions are many. All are familiar with the experience of a local farmer who, a number of years ago, plowed his corn on a Holy Day, only to have it destroyed by hail the next day. That the punishment was special was proven by the fact that adjoining fields were unharmed.

FIG. 3. *The age and condition of this revered crucifix reveal the age of the culture and the poverty of the people.*

Training of children in the knowledge and practices of the church is begun at an early age. The first reading is often done from books on the catechism. Teachers in rural schools are especially esteemed by the parents if they are willing to help teach the catechism to the children. When a child has arrived at the age of 10 he is expected to know the church rituals and to be familiar with the teachings and practices of a good Catholic.

By way of recapitulation, it may be said that the village of El Cerrito, when compared with more modern rural communities of the country has its own characteristic features. It is peculiar in its age – a community that has existed in its own way and with little physical change for many decades. Until very recently it has existed with little concern or dependence upon the outside world, except for the meager material substance that enabled its people to live. Until absolute necessity deprived them of choice, the villagers were able to resist change and adjustment. Their resources and opportunities have now reached so low a point that the people are becoming convinced that radical change must be made in their way of life. Some are of the opinion that necessary adaptation will mean abandonment of many values and customs that have been the support of these people and, in large measure, the very purpose for which they live.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF THE SETTLEMENT

The date of the present occupancy of El Cerrito goes back well over a century. It is shown as a village on a map of New Mexico compiled as far back as 1844. One of the oldest residents of the village was born here and says that his grandfather came here when he was young. Practically all of the families are descendants of the pioneer settlers who moved to the locality in order to be closer to their grazing lands. They came from neighboring villages, the majority from San Miguel which is only about 12 miles north on the same river. This parent settlement is one of the oldest in New Mexico. Two of the settler families owned large flocks of sheep. Most of the other families followed this source of employment. A few of the families most closely related to the stockmen soon had small herds of their own. More land was available than the current stock could cover and any entrepreneur, with a little capital and courage, might begin a business of his own. These new businesses were begun mainly on the initiative of the entrepreneur himself, because the stockmen realized the possibility of future competition. Thus, letting herds on a sharecropping basis was not a popular practice in the early days. Stockmen preferred to pay wages, even though these were frequently paid in terms of goods.

In such a situation people naturally developed a deep sense of dependence upon the stockmen, and came to depend upon their employers for advice as well as employment. Fortunately, such men accepted this responsibility and eventually came to dominate all the affairs of the village. Dependents and incapacitated persons came under their protection. Under a well-regulated and organized system, available work was distributed in accordance with need to those not regularly on the "Patron's" payroll. The only independent economic pursuit of all laborers was the cultivation of their small irrigated land holdings. As the local irrigated land was grant land and as all families were descendants of the original grantees each family was entitled to a small holding.

These early settlers in El Cerrito found the area especially adaptable to stock raising. Though it was poor farming land, the mesa had a good covering of bunch grass. It was this abundant pasture land that induced the settlers to move. Part of the area had been in use by the people from San Miguel previously, but distance from the village had prevented their making full use of it.

Farming on land which could not be irrigated has never offered a great deal of inducement in this area. A rigorous climate and scant rainfall are serious handicaps to such an enterprise. Rainfall is not only meager but extremely uncertain. Although the annual precipitation for this area ranges from 15 to 18 inches, half of this may come within a few days' time with no more for a period of weeks. There is usually sufficient moisture for planting of crops in May, but June is likely to be extremely dry, with rain again in July and August. This is the expectation pattern under which the local farmers operate.

The altitude in this area is between 6 and 7 thousand feet. The winters are long and the growing season short. Crops are limited to those which will mature quickly. There can be little waiting for rain, and only a brief postponement incurs the risk of death to the crop from an early frost before it has had a chance to mature.

Soils of the high mesa land are not suitable for agriculture. Generally of a rough, stony variety, they are shallow and unsuitable for proper cultivation. Their absorptive power is usually low, rendering them subject to both water and wind erosion. Once the grass cover has been removed, rain and wind quickly take their toll. Even close grazing seriously weakens the resistance of the soil. The effects of the destruction of this cover are not limited to the area affected. Reports of studies completed and others in progress on the Pecos Watershed repeatedly point out that the depletion of the grass cover has added tremendously to the flood damage along the Pecos River during the last two or three decades.

FIG. 4. *Without irrigation there would be few beans and tortillas.*

Despite the odds against such an enterprise, many of the new settlers undertook part-time farming on the mesa lands. Corn and wheat were the principal crops cultivated. and for a time the new soil and favorable seasons combined to make such enterprises partially successful. But within a brief period of time the majority of the families abandoned the practice in favor of the more certain jobs with local stockmen. Those who did continue farming the mesa did so on a substantially reduced scale.

Because of these peculiar environmental factors, dry farming did not become a profitable and certain enterprise. Only the irrigated land of the local valley has ever assured a bountiful harvest. This land was fertile and water from the Pecos River was always available. Hence the people became more and more dependent upon their small irrigated holdings as a supplement to their livelihood. Money and goods earned at wage work, plus the subsistence products grown at home enabled these families to survive in a satisfactory way. Both sources were of tremendous importance. The failure of either to contribute heavily meant deprivation if not near destitution.

The early economy of San Miguel County was one of abundance. Land was available and could be had for either the asking or the taking. Temporary depletion of the grass resource invoked little more hardship than moving livestock to another proximate area or spreading it over a wider base. Little thought was given to the fact that some day the soil might be impoverished or exhausted. On the other hand, some effort was made to preserve the valley soil. The practice of spreading barnyard manure on the soil seems to go back well into the history of the village of El Cerrito. During the last few decades the necessity for this practice has been increasingly realized.

Each of the two classes of land cultivated, dry and irrigated, had its own special crops that were planted year after year. The dry-farming land was devoted to wheat and some corn, the irrigated land to corn, alfalfa, and garden products. There was little diversification. The same piece of land might be planted to the same crop year after year.

The general pattern for agriculture is little changed in present-day El Cerrito. Little attempt is made to experiment with new crops. The fairly recent shift to beans as a staple crop to substitute for wheat has been the only significant change. The value of this change is questioned by many of the people. Only a few are convinced that any appreciable benefit has accrued because of the substitution. Beans are grown for food as was wheat. Instead of the old process of selling wheat and buying beans the reverse now prevails.

The changes that have come about during the last half century in the economic resources of these people have brought about a realization of the need for adjustment. These changes are vividly outlined in the life history of one of the oldest men in the village. It is given below as he unfolded it.

I was born in El Cerrito and have lived here all of my life except 2 or 3 years. These years were spent in other parts of New Mexico while I was working for the railroad and as a freighter. I owned a little property in El Cerrito all this time and thought of it (El Cerrito) as my home.

My father was a very strong and healthy man. I remember him very well as he lived to be 55 years old. He was born in Santa Fe. He used to tell us many stories of life in Santa Fe when he was a boy. The place was very tough then and there was always danger from the Indians. He used to fight the Indians and was a very good fighter, too.

When he was very young he came to Pecos (town in San Miguel County) and worked there for a long time. He then moved to San Miguel and it was there he met my mother and they were married. When they were married he bought some land in El Cerrito and moved there. I was born here in 1862.

My father worked very hard and was a good business man. Soon after he came to El Cerrito he bought more land (in another village some 10 miles from El Cerrito) but most of his money went for cattle. He was very well off financially, had lots of money always. In a few years he had several hundred head of cattle. He used to keep money around the house in jars.

My father believed in working hard and he made us work hard too. He used to get up very early in the morning, while it was still dark. There were horses to feed and water to bring. A boy of 8 years then was expected to be able to work all day. We worked much harder than the boys do now. Oh, much harder. The girls worked, too, but it was for the man. The women had plenty to do around the house. There was wool to card and spin. There were clothes to make, too. We made most all of our clothes then. It was so much better than now when one has to buy everything. Money wasn't important then. Everything was made at home and not bought at a store.

Although we worked hard in those times, we used to find time for play. We could play on bad days, on Saturday afternoons, and Sunday after Rosary. We

couldn't play before Rosary on Sunday. There were several games which we played. We used to take a ball and toss it to one another. Used to play a game something like golf. The balls were made by hand and so were the sticks.

My father didn't mind our playing as long as we did our work well. He would never join in with us but would often stand and watch us play for long periods of time.

When I was a boy many people would die and get killed. There was much danger during those days. When a person died the custom was for all of the man's friends and relatives to visit the dead man's family. I didn't mind going to those places. There was always plenty of food to eat. However, I didn't like the burials. I used to get scared when they began to throw dirt on the body.

When I was a boy the Indians would come to the village at night. They would steal meat and lard from the houses. The people here always had meat and lard made from the buffalo. The Indians used to steal tortillas too. They would bring long pointed stocks and spear the tortillas from the windows.

One time the Indians came while my father was taking an ox to water. They took the ox away from him and ran up into the mountains. When father came back to the village he ran to a huge drum in the village, used for warning the people against the Indians, and began beating on it. When the people heard the noise they came and went after the Indians. They finally found the ox but there was nothing left but the bones. The Indians had killed the ox, cut off the meat, wrapped it in a serape and gone away.

I went to school very little when I was a boy. The school term was short and we were taught in Spanish. Nothing more than the catechism and the letters were taught then. About all the teachers knew then was how to say A, B, C, etc.

I can remember those teachers very well. They were all men and were very mean to the children. They believed in using the whip freely. They used to make us cross our fingers, then they would tie the fingers together and whip us. They used small leather quirts. Sometimes they would make us take off our clothes before they began whipping us. I think everyone was too afraid of the teacher then to learn anything.

I can remember when the church sponsored lots of fiestas and dances. Those were good times when everyone had lots of fun. Sometimes the fiestas would last for several days. People would bring food and eat together.

When I was small a woman who was very rich lived here. She made a lot of money from sheep and cattle. (A member of the rival family in the village.) She had several peons and was very mean to them. Used to have them lashed when they disobeyed her. She didn't get along very well with the people here. She would cheat them and pay them very little when they worked for her. I remember a foreman that used to work for her. He was a very mean but a very funny fellow. He was always playing jokes. He used to milk cows for her. I remember one time he milked a pail full from a cow and then sat in it. That was very funny.

Times were good then and everyone had some money. No one lacked food and there was always work. There was a system here then that has died out. The people in El Cerrito used to elect a "conservator" each year. He acted as a sort of governor of the village. The people had to do what he told them to. In those times the people would work together in planting and harvest time. The conservator would call the men to work and could determine which work should be done first. When someone wanted to hire a man he had to come to the conservator. He could determine who could have the job. Always he would select the family that needed the work most. In that way the needy were usually provided for. In case they were not, he could ask the people for money or grain to give the "pobres." I don't think he ever had much trouble with the people--everyone did as he told them.

My family was very large. There were eight children, four girls and four boys. When my father died we were all living at home. He left the property to mother but the boys managed everything. We did this, dividing the profits equally. This continued until my mother died four years later. Then the property was divided into eight equal parts.

A few years after my mother died a man by the name of R. came to Las Vegas. He had some money and quite a few sheep. He talked three of us boys into taking some of his sheep on a share basis. We did this and gave him a mortgage on a part of our cattle. For a few years we did pretty well, then came a number of very dry years in succession. We lost so many sheep that we had to give R. some of our cattle. I lost so many sheep that it took all of my cattle to pay R. I lost everything that I had. I paid him though, every penny of the debt, I paid him.

After this misfortune I began to work as a freighter. Used to travel between the towns of Las Vegas, Tucumcari, Santa Rosa, and Lincoln. I did this work for about 10 years. During this time I saved enough money to buy about 3 acres of the irrigated land in El Cerrito. There was no need to try to buy cattle or sheep again. The land around El Cerrito was taken up. I guess good times are gone from El Cerrito for good.

The area of land owned by villagers was somewhat increased in 1916 by the opening of surrounding land for homesteading. Many of the El Cerrito families took advantage of this opportunity and filed upon tracts of land varying from 40 to 640 acres. Unfortunately, many of these homesteads were poor or so inaccessible from the village that little material benefit has ever been derived from them. Only two of the local families are seriously undertaking to make these homesteads support them. These two families are cultivating some 30 or 40 acres and devoting the remainder to chickens and livestock. One of the men is singularly optimistic about his enterprise, stating that last year he managed to live with no aid from outside sources. However, he admits the necessity of having some source of cash income in addition to his present resources in order to enable him to live for the next few years. Once firmly established, he expects to earn his entire living from his farm.

THE BACKGROUND OF PRESENT POPULATION

Cultural Ethnic and Nationality Origins.

The entire population of El Cerrito is of native or Spanish-American stock, descendants of Conquistadores who mixed their blood with that of the indigenous population. They are a segment of a larger whole that has blended blood, knowledge, and techniques of old Spain with that of a new world. The Indian heritage was leaned upon heavily for local knowledge of terrain, the elements, and the means of combating them. Agricultural techniques were of special significance, for many of the early Spanish Colonists were not farmers. Evidence of knowledge gained from the indigenous peoples can be seen today in the mud houses, the crops and foods, the methods and tools of farming used by the natives. The process was one of borrowing rather than assimilation. Today the native still speaks the language, enjoys the customs, and is endowed with the superstitions of Andalusian Spain. Nor is there any conflict in the combination. Time and struggle have compounded these elements into a singular product - the native or Spanish-American people.

The native people of San Miguel County, N. Mex. have never been a landless proletariat. Most of the families have been able to establish enough relationship with an original land grantee to become eligible for a home site on some Spanish or Mexican grant. Each family in El Cerrito either owns a tract of land or is in line for inheritance. These tracts have been handed down from the beneficiaries of the original San Miguel del Bado Grant, and the families have clung to them tenaciously. Only a very limited number of present inhabitants of this grant own more than a few acres of grant land, and most of that has been inherited. Stockmen have established themselves on the surrounding mesa. The grant land is limited in the concentration of its use as well as in its ownership. Few families are interested in doing full-time farming even if the local holdings could be gathered together into a paying-sized farm.

The pattern of ownership of the mesa land has changed during the last 40 years. Before 1900, or even 1916, there was little large-scale local ownership of the mesa land.

Families had deeds for their irrigated holdings but the mesa land was either leased or used free. The greatest change took place immediately after 1916, when land in the area was opened to homesteading. Some of the stockmen in the area placed families upon desirable tracts of land, buying them out as soon as their claims had been lived up and recorded. Other claims were bought from bona fide settlers who had come into the area for land. Extensive tracts were still leased, however, from the State and Federal Governments and from homesteaders who did not continue to live on the homesteads after they were proved up. Lease rates were, and still are, reasonable, varying from 3 to 8 cents an acre depending upon the condition of the grass, whether there is a fence, and the availability of a water supply. The latter factor is the more important. A well-built ground tank or spring on the land will easily double its value to the stockman.

During the last decade, the marked lull in the demand for the services of these people has resulted in increased dependence upon individual holdings. Despite this trend, apparently attitudes toward conserving this land have undergone only slight modification. The concensus is that little could be accomplished by better and more intensive use of the small acreage that most of them have. Attention is predominantly centered upon the possibility of finding labor on the outside. As a result of this attitude, little concern is shown for the possibilities of complete use of owned resources. The home garden may be neglected, even abandoned, to follow the merest chance of obtaining a job outside. Sometimes the family may continue to care for the garden and subsistence crop during the husband's absence in search of work, but unless there are boys large enough to take the place of the husband, total loss of the home production may result.

Patterns of Social Behavior

The colonists to New Spain brought with them a highly integrated pattern of social life, built around two principal institutions, the family and the church. Each of these institutions aided and supported the other. The church was the final authority for and initiator of all forms of formal social participation. Church festivals, fiestas, horse races, games, dances, and serenades which formed the basis for all social life were usually under the sponsorship and direction of the local priests. Even the activities of daily life, conduct, and functions of the family were tremendously influenced by the authoritarian church. The integration, loyalty, and discipline of the family is still vitally tied in with the role and function of the church.

Although the family is still a highly integrated unit among the native people of New Mexico, it was even more so in the early history of the State. The structure and functions of this unit were definite. The authority of the father was never questioned. The oldest male in the group occupied a position that was never lost or relinquished until his death. His authority was felt in every function of village life. It was he who could fix the group opinion about any current problem or event. It was for him to say when the corn should be planted, how the family property should be managed and divided, what the share of each individual should be. As long as he lived none of the heirs might have exclusive right or use of a particular part of the family estate unless it was his particular will that this should be so. In many cases the family members pooled their efforts in running the estate and the profits were divided among them. If the head of this hierarchy lived to a ripe old age it might be that sons and grandsons would occupy a community of ownership between them. In such a case the head of the family group might have retired from active participation, contributing no more than his knowledge to the operation of the property.

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FIG. 5. *The songs of "Old Spain" are still remembered.*

Often such a family, or group of families, lived in adjoining houses, in a definite section of the village. They were segregated and frequently alined against another and similar group in the village. Such a situation led to friction, which was sometimes intense. Differences between individuals were likely to get the separate groups involved, often leading to open fights between the groups. Once begun, these group differences or conflicts were likely to continue and gain in intensity with the passing of time. Some of these begun decades ago still persist, although the local

situations may have undergone radical change. Many of these group conflicts exist where the knowledge of the cause has been forgotten for one or more generations.

Although changes have been far-reaching in the economic situation of El Cerrito during the last half-century or more, the old pattern of living of the early colonization days still persists in many ways. The practice of cooperation and mutual aid are still dominant traits of their culture. Efforts are still pooled in any endeavor that necessitates it. This pattern of behavior involves the entire village of El Cerrito although it is obviously stronger among the more closely related families. The pattern in former communal ownership can still be discerned in the attitudes of the people toward borrowing and lending. Tools and equipment are exchanged freely with little thought of their belonging to any particular member. The local Farm Security Administration supervisor says that such a background makes it easy to conduct cooperative enterprises among the native people, if the different groups are recognized and properly taken into account.

Dominant Values and Sanctions

Every group has its dominant mores and customs, with sanctions and taboos for human conduct, to which the individual is expected to conform. The values attached to the expected modes of behavior play a tremendous role in the life and conduct of both groups and the individuals that compose them. To understand these dominant sanctions and taboos, and the values attached thereto, is to go far toward understanding a people and its culture.

Among the native people the values attached to such practices as thrift and hard work as ends in and of themselves have never attained the importance they have with other groups of people. These natives are able to see neither sin nor moral corruption in idleness and leisure time. They see neither virtue nor common sense in keeping busy for the sake of occupying the hands and the mind. Work is simply a means to an end - a means of accomplishing that which is valued or desired, and as such these people realize its importance. Children are taught at an early age the necessity of labor and are given ample opportunity to put it into practice. But the necessity of work lies in what it will bring in a material way - money, land, and independence. It is not believed that it adds to the moral fiber of the individual. Furthermore, the mere accumulation of material goods adds little to the popular esteem for an individual. The prestige of the man depends in no small measure upon his contribution to the fiestas or his activities in the political life and interests of the group.

Contacts with the Anglo-American in recent decades have somewhat affected the attitude of the natives toward hard work and thrift, especially their regard for the latter. Contacts with this new element have convinced them that the emphasis placed upon thrift and hard work by the Anglo has substantially accelerated his progress in New Mexico. It has brought about a general recognition of the need for a greater emphasis upon these practices in order to meet competition successfully.

But these new contacts have failed to alter materially the social contexture of the village life of these natives. Any apparent changes are superficial, scarcely touching the deeper convictions of the people. The real alterations in attitude apparently come from the realization of the need for adaptations in order to compete more successfully in a struggle that to date has been almost disastrous.

FIG. 6. *"A man's home is his castle." The patriarch of the village.*

FIG. 7. *A "larger family" at mealtime.*

The role of the woman has always been a subordinate one in the Spanish culture. Her role is definite, and despite its subordinate nature is one of extreme importance in the stability and integration of the group. It is a much more restricted one than that of the man. A woman is expected to be faithful to the teachings and practices of the church. In doing this she may make up for some of the negligence of the husband. Her principal function is to produce children. Her interests are centered in the family and the home. She receives neither encouragement nor appreciation for participation outside this limited sphere. If she follows these rules of conduct she will have been successful in her role in the village. Failing in any one she will have incurred the serious displeasure of the group. It is rarely that she dares risk stepping out of the role prescribed for her. To do so might mean ostracism from the social life of the womenfolk. This is no easy punishment to bear when visiting and conversation with other women offer the only release from the drab routine of housework and child care.

The role of the man is much less restricted. Although he is expected to attend church, public opinion censors him much less severely than it censors the woman in case of failure to do so. His role and obligations are much more closely interwoven into the function and interests of the group. He is expected to be loyal to his family and assume the material responsibility of supporting his wife and children. But failure to live up to his obligations and responsibilities to the group are met with much greater disfavor. He is soon forgiven for a clandestine affair with a woman other than his wife but refusal to lend his farming tools to a neighbor is long remembered. He is seldom criticized for intoxication, but should be fail to report for duty at the annual cleaning of the community irrigation ditch the ire of the group would be strongly aroused.

A strict code of honesty and fairness within the group is found. Thievery or plundering seldom occurs in the village. Such an act would be entirely foreign to the thinking of a member of one of these closely integrated villages. The present Justice of the Peace claims never to have had such a case before him. The residents unanimously state that such things seldom happen in the rural native villages. An act of this kind would bring such extreme displeasure from the group that an individual could scarcely bring himself to do it even if the desire were present.

The people remember two cases of criminal conviction in the history of the village. One case happened during Prohibition when a local man was apprehended and convicted for making and selling liquor. The local people did not seriously disapprove of his act and had they disapproved it is unlikely that it would have been committed. The other incident happened several years ago when a local man was assaulted and severely beaten by a rival in an affair involving the use of certain pasture lands.

It seems unlikely that a family could seriously violate the social codes of the native villages and remain for long. Group approval means too much.

In many respects the village of El Cerrito has changed little in the last hundred years. The most obvious change, as mentioned above, has been the dwindling material resources of the people. Economic retrogression has been from ample resources to a situation where the people are literally stranded in their village homes. It is doubtful if the resources of El Cerrito could adequately care for more than one-fourth its present population. The reasons for the extreme tenacity with which the people have clung to their village and their meager possessions must be found in other than the economic.

The ties that bind these people to their land and village are many and strong. They have a strong sense of belonging to the village and feel strange elsewhere. The situation into which the local residents are born ill fits them for living in any other place. The local organizations, amusements, means of recreation, even ideas and superstitions, belong to sixteenth-century Spain much more than to the modern world. Once these things are given proper consideration it is not difficult to see why the people cling to their native habitat at great material cost.

It is only a few of the younger people, those who have been away to school or to one of the recently established Government camps, who express a preference for life outside the village. A majority would prefer living full-time in the village if only they were able to earn the means that would enable them to do so. It is with extreme reluctance that some of the people are coming to admit the lack of any choice between obtaining greater resources in their village and moving away to where such resources may be found.

THE PEOPLE ON THE LAND

Land Use: Patterns of Ownership

Each family in El Cerrito either owns or is in line to inherit some land. Unfortunately, only a few have holdings sufficiently large to justify full-time farming or stock raising. The largest landholder owns 2,000 acres of dry mesa land. Although this land is poorly stocked the annual income from it is usually sufficient to maintain the resident family at a mediocre level of living. The smallest tract in the settlement is one-fourth acre of irrigated land. This holding furnishes the family a home site and a small garden. The husband, wife, and seven children depend for their livelihood upon the wages earned at irregular intervals by the husband.

The majority of these families own and operate from 10 to 40 acres of dry-farming land plus 1 to 4 acres of irrigated land. Little of this is used or regarded as a source of cash income. In especially good years there may be a few extra sacks of beans for sale, but little more. It is expected that this land will furnish little more than a good portion of the food for the family table and enough forage for the small number of livestock possessed.

The smaller landholders have never owned more than tiny tracts of land. They have depended upon the local patrons or outside sources to furnish them with labor. Only a few have ever bought land. Those who own more than the small strips of grant land homesteaded it, either during or subsequent to 1916. Little of this patented land has been sold. The strips are so scattered or otherwise so undesirable that a buyer is difficult to find.

Few of these families have advanced from the status of laborer to a position where resources owned would allow self-sustenance. The two families in the village owning and leasing sufficient land to be independent are descendants of the one-time big stockman of the settlement. Their holdings were inherited, in large part, although the owners have shown above-average ability in clinging to them. Other members of one of these families have long ago lost or disposed of their shares until they are definitely back on a level with families which at one time worked for them.

The people of El Cerrito think in terms of their immediate problems. There is little thought or planning with a view to accumulating property and advancing toward a status that would enable them to live from their own resources. Much more concern is shown toward being certified for WPA work or the possibility of securing some sort of seasonal labor on the outside. The one exception is a resident, who during the last 10 years, has traded for and bought enough land to merit some hope of becoming self

sustaining on his own farm. With the help of a son and a daughter employed in the CCC and NYA camps, respectively, and with his own earnings from various governmental agencies, he has been able to add approximately 20 acres to his original 10. Another 10 acres will support his family at a comfortable level of living. This additional acreage he hopes to buy within the next few years, providing his present sources of income are not further curtailed.

The abuses inherent in the local pattern of land inheritance are slowly being recognized by these people. Subdividing tracts that were already too small for efficient operation has almost reached a limit. Many of the holdings have become so small that it is difficult for the owners to know exactly where the boundaries lie. Fences are often impracticable as they remove a certain amount of land from cultivation and interfere with proper plowing and cultivation.

During recent years the custom of equal inheritance has been further abused by the inability of a few members of the family to buy the shares of the others. It is generally recognized that the male members of the family have the right to buy the shares of their sisters if they are financially able to do so. Because of recent limitation in outside employment and consequent reduction in income few have found this possible.

The staple crops in El Cerrito are corn, beans, and alfalfa. Beans and corn are grown for family consumption. Alfalfa is grown as feed for the livestock, and is well adapted to the valley soil. More feed is produced per acre from this crop than from any other. Largely for this reason, more than half the irrigated land is continuously devoted to this one crop.

Several different varieties of corn are grown, the most common being native blue corn. This variety was grown by the Indians, who taught the Spanish colonists how to plant and cultivate it. A great variety of dishes are prepared from it. All of the local people agree that it is far superior to any other variety in taste and nutritive content. Although the other varieties may be fed to livestock, the blue corn is seldom so used. It is too important and necessary as food for the people.

Limited numbers of livestock are found in the village. Those owning cows and horses are handicapped by lack of space in which to keep them. Chickens are common, although the number in a flock is usually limited to 10 or 15. These are kept for the eggs they produce, as they are considered much too valuable to eat. Only the most fortunate families ever feel justified in killing one for meat.

Most of the families have from one to three horses, and a few keep milk cows. The milk cows are more than family concern. A cow produces milk and butter, not only for the immediate family, but also for sons, daughters, and possibly a neighbor. Milk and butter are not common elements in the local diet. Only the small children get milk to drink. An adult is considered fortunate if he has enough for his coffee.

Only four of the families keep hogs. Others say that buying lard is more economical than producing it. Meat is not considered an essential part of the diet, and it is only during the winter months that meat is bought, and then in very small quantities. Lard is deemed much more important. Hogs that are butchered for home use are killed chiefly for the lard they will render. When a family butchers a hog some of

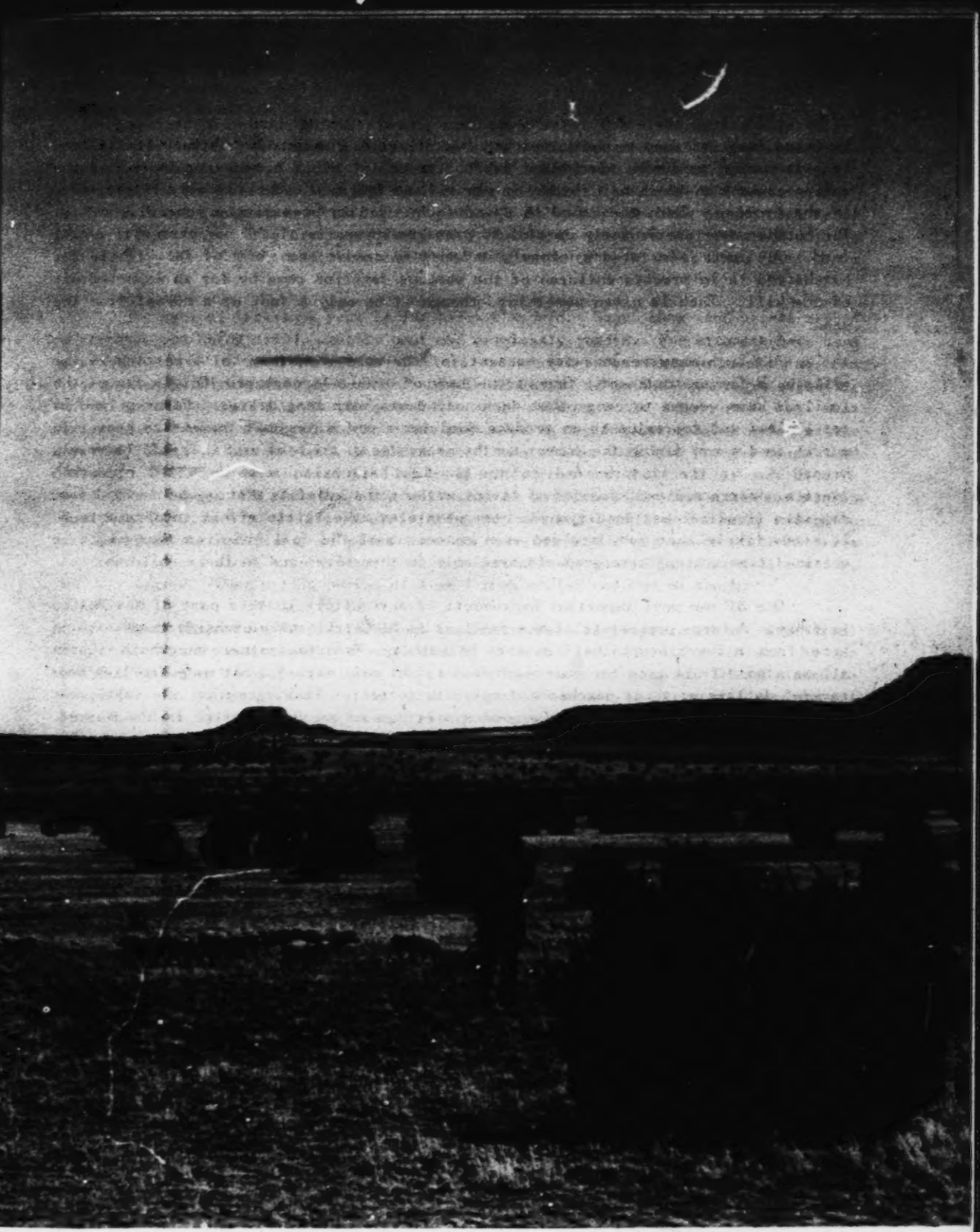


FIG. 8. *"We are stockmen, not farmers," the people will tell you.*

the meat is given away to relatives and less fortunate neighbors but very little lard is given away, as it is considered far too valuable. This butchering is one of the rare occasions on which each family in the village has meat. There is very little waste in the process. Even the blood is saved to be used in preparing a special pudding. The butchers are particularly careful to preserve any parts of the hog that will render lard. All cuts of meat are closely trimmed to remove each bit of fat. While the butchering is in process children of the various families come by for an expected bit of the kill. Each is given something, though it be only a foot or a morsel from the head.

Although many reasons may account for the woeful shortage of livestock in the village, a few are dominant. One is the lack of available pasture. Only a few of the families have access to range that does not necessitate long drives. Farming land is too limited and too valuable to produce food for a cow throughout the entire year. To corral-feed a cow during the summer months means use of the feed crop that will be sorely needed during the winter. And to the physical situation must be added a certain inertia. Years and even decades of living without the benefits that may be derived from domestic livestock has conditioned these people to make little effort to obtain them. It seems likely that many are not even conscious of the full benefits that might be obtained from making these products available to themselves and to their children.

One of the most important byproducts of agriculture in this part of New Mexico is fruit. A large percentage of the families in El Cerrito have orchards that range in size from a few trees to half an acre in extent. When the rather uncertain season allows a good fruit crop the source of food is not only extended but many families have several dollars worth of peaches and apricots to sell. Fruit grown in the valley has the reputation of being unusually good and brings an excellent price in the market. The surplus is disposed of without difficulty.

In addition to fruit sold and that eaten in season, a large volume of fruit is preserved and canned for the winter months. Certain housewives claim to store enough fruit to meet the needs of their families until it is again in season. Most of this fruit is stored in glass jars, but some apricots and peaches are dried.

Unfortunately, these orchards are not receiving adequate care and attention. Few of the trees are pruned, and the older and less productive ones are seldom replaced. Insects that destroy the apple crop year after year are allowed to continue their ravages. But despite the heavy losses by insects and frequent late frosts, the growing of fruit still remains one of the most valuable enterprises of the valley.

Another infrequent source of income is the gathering of wild piñon nuts that grow on the mesa near the village. These nuts are comparatively easy to gather, are free for the taking, and command a good price on the market. Some local families claim to have made more than $200 in a season gathering and selling piñons. This crop is too seldom productive, however, to be depended upon. It is claimed that good crops are produced only once in every 6 or 7 years.

Techniques of Agriculture

Agricultural practices in this region have not changed greatly. Sons have truly followed in the footsteps of the fathers, and their sons, in turn, have followed after them. An early colonist returning to El Cerrito today would find little change in

crops grown or in methods of cultivating and harvesting. Beans, corn, and alfalfa are planted year after year, with infrequent rotation. The one pronounced crop change has been the substitution of beans for wheat. Older residents claim that much more wheat was grown in the past when rainfall was heavier and wheat flour more difficult to buy. Only two local families are still growing wheat. All other families regard bean crops as more important. They are more likely to produce with scant rainfall and add more to the family diet. It is more economical and desirable to be without flour than to be without beans.

The type of livestock kept is far below standard. Hogs, cows, and horses are of a scrubby, yet hardy breed, usually poor and carelessly tended. Few attempts have been made to improve the native breeds. The villagers prefer what they have and can find reasons for justifying this preference. Little education as to the advantages of better stock has been available to them, and any such attempt would likely meet with some resistance. One of the local stockmen was persuaded to try improving his herd of cattle several years ago but met with little success. He claims that the cows he bought and moved to his ranch were not adapted to local conditions and that half of them died in less than a year. He summed up the situation as follows: "In certain areas of New Mexico a high grade of cattle is profitable, but not here. If one is lucky enough to have a good year and plenty of grass there is more profit in high-grade stuff but if a dry year happens along this type of cattle is not able to rustle like the native stock, and may starve. Over a long period of time I much prefer our native stock."

It is true that better livestock would not receive proper care and attention. Proper shelter is not available, even during the severe parts of the winter. No one would consider calling a veterinary if a cow becomes sick or injured. The distance to town would be too great and the cost prohibitive. Even the proper medicine would not be available. Native stock is treated with home remedies that require only the simplest of ingredients such as lard, salt, and a few native plants and herbs.

The farm equipment and machinery used in this area are of the simplest sort. Large machinery is neither used nor appreciated. A horse, a turning plow, and a few hoes and forks make up the standard equipment in common use. The turning plow is used to turn the soil, plant the crop, and cultivate it. Wheat and beans are threshed by hand. If the crop is large enough to justify it horses or goats may aid in the threshing. A corral is built with a good hard floor, and the horses or goats are driven around on top of the harvest until the grain has been separated out. The grain is cleaned by means of winnowing. Women and children often lend aid in doing this.

Alfalfa is the sole crop that is not harvested by hand tools. Two of the families have horse-drawn mowing machines which cut most of the alfalfa in the valley. The owners of the machines are given a portion of the alfalfa or its equivalent in labor as payment for cutting it. Cash is never involved in the exchange.

Plowing and planting operations begin in late May or the early part of June. The date may vary from 2 to 3 weeks, depending upon the mildness of the season or the quantity of moisture in the ground. The two operations are usually carried out simultaneously. As the soil is being turned the seeds are dropped into each third furrow.

The village has only one planting machine. It is a walking device, pulled by one horse and capable of planting one row at a time. The owner is regarded as the most modern farmer in the village, although he received some criticism for his investments

in more efficient farm tools. People feel that time and labor saving devices are of minor importance. Efficiency and saving of time mean little where already man power is far in excess of the work to be done.

Intensive cultivation of the crops begins in the latter part of June. Beans and corn are plowed from three to five times, depending upon the rainfall and the number of times the land is irrigated. The crops are weeded and thinned when, according to local standards, these operations are deemed necessary. These tasks fall to the boys, aided at intervals by the father. Alfalfa, which besides harvesting requires about three irrigations in spring and summer, entails less labor than any crop grown on the irrigated land. It requires reseeding only once in each 5 to 7 years. Most of the farmers agree that reseeding is best at each 5-year period but that many wait longer because of the cost involved in buying new seed.

The system of irrigation in use by the many villages along the Pecos river in New Mexico is an old one. No one remembers when it was installed in El Cerrito. There is considerable evidence that it may have been built originally by the Indians who once inhabited this area. The present course of the ditch has been unchanged for many years. Evidence of this is found in the many feet of bank that have been built up by annual cleanings. Even in places where construction of the ditch would have necessitated removal of only a few feet of dirt, the height of the lower bank has risen to 10 feet or more. The "Madre acequia" or main ditch is slightly less than 2 miles long. It begins at a bottle-neck part of the river, where a makeshift dam has been built. This dam was constructed by means of laying a line of stone across the river and stacking brush and long poles behind it. Thus the bed of the river, above the dam, has been raised a height of approximately 6 feet. This added elevation enables the water to flow out into the main ditch and on to the valley below.

The construction of the dam is such that there is little assurance of its permanency. Any big flood or unusual flow of water might destroy the entire structure. No provision is made for diversion, hence the dam must carry the weight and pressure of any quantity of water that happens to come over it. If the pressure is too great the dam is destroyed, as are the crops below which are dependent upon it. Before it can be restored lack of water has probably killed the crops in the valley.

From the dam the main ditch runs along the river, but the ditch's fall is less than that of the river, and it carries its water many feet above the surface of the river at the entrance to the valley. This main ditch and its smaller tributaries are maintained and repaired communally by the users of the water. The organization for carrying out these tasks is one of the most highly integrated and efficient in the community. Its chief functions are carried on by a mayordomo or ditch boss who supervises all work on the irrigation system, and a committee which is responsible for all rules governing the use of the water. All of these are elected annually. There is seldom an occasion for interference or supervision of the use of the water. It is available for anyone needing it, with never a longer wait than 2 or 3 days.

There are no intense and extended seasons of farm labor in El Cerrito. Although such tasks as planting, cultivating, and harvesting require a few days of intense effort they are soon over and the farmer is again able to distribute his time and labor over a wide variety of tasks. A full day's labor during the busiest season is interspersed with periods for relaxation. Although the worker may rise early and go about feeding

FIG. 9. *Bread is still baked outside – a survival of many generations.*

FIG. 10. *In kitchens such as this the traditional diet is prepared – a diet balanced by generations of experience.*

and caring for his domestic livestock there is no hurry at breakfast time. After breakfast and a brief planning of the day's work, he is off for the field until 11 or 11:30. The noon meal consumes a good half hour, followed by 1 or 2 hours of siesta. The afternoon's work in the field assumes the same tempo. The farmer is usually back home when the sun is an hour or more high, for supper and to do the evening chores around the house. He attends to the horses and the cow, if there is one, after the evening meal is over. Throughout the day he has had time for brief chats and frequent exchanges of advice with passing friends or relatives. In brief, there is little rushing brought about by time or season. Caring for the average farm unit necessitates little haste. One is able to choose here between a slow tempo and a more complete use of time and greater haste which would result in larger blocks of leisure time or idleness. Custom and habit usually favor the moderate work tempo.

Commercialization and Self-Sufficiency

Little of what could be designated as commercial farming is found in El Cerrito. The sale of a few beans and, during productive years, a few dollars worth of peaches constitutes the sole income from cash crops. With the exception of the two families owning sheep and cattle almost all cash is earned from labor on the outside. The most extensive dry-land farmer in El Cerrito sold only $80 worth of products last year. The range was from this sum to zero. Few families sold more than 10 or 15 dollars worth.

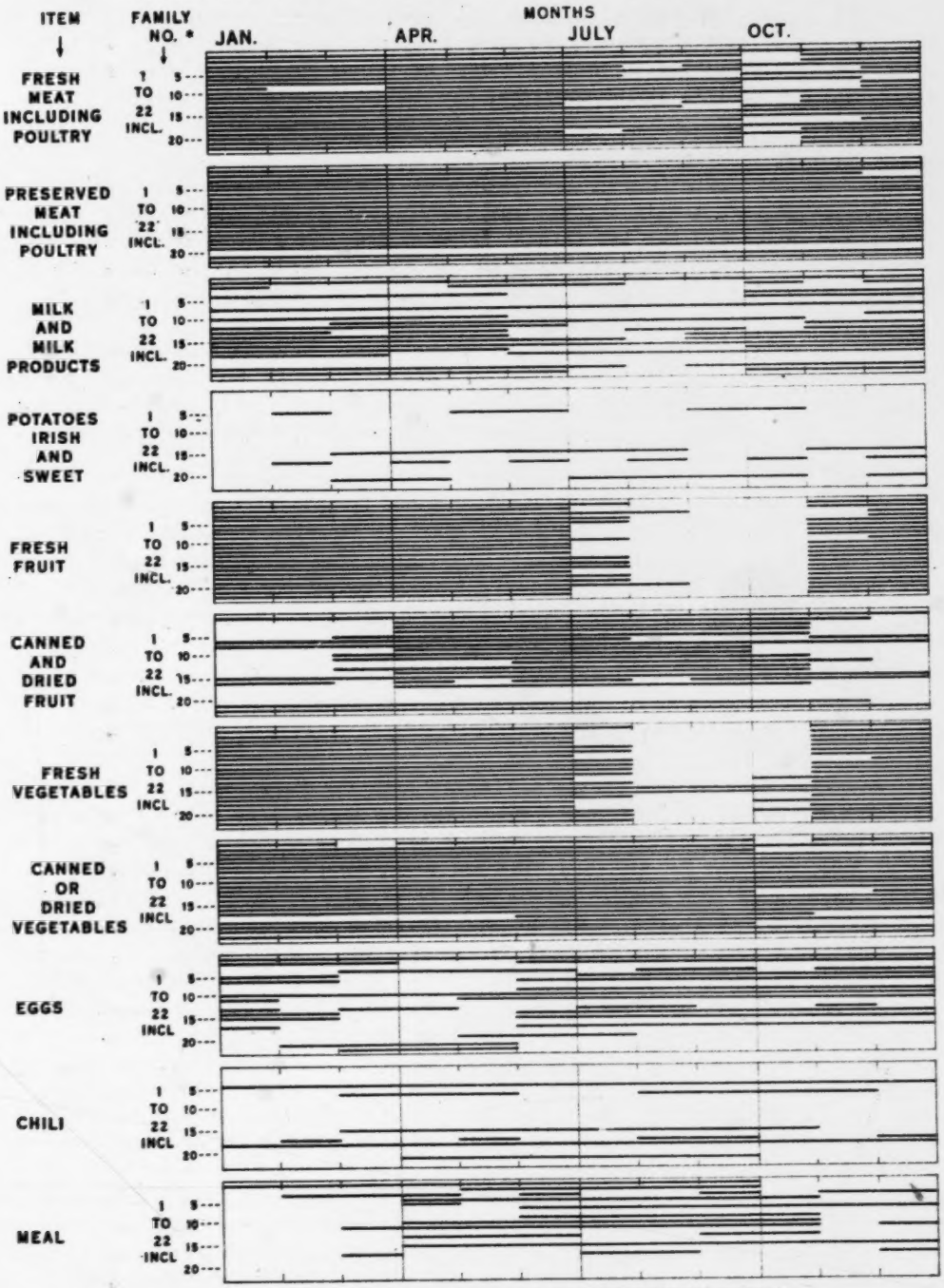
The emphasis in El Cerrito is upon subsistence farming. An effort is made by all families to produce as much of their food as possible. Beans and corn, which form such a substantial portion of the local diet, are grown in sufficient quantities to last the family for the major portion of the year. During the summer months well-kept gardens support the family table, with the exception of flour and the few smaller items that must be bought. One of the residents estimated that the cash needs for food of his family was no more than $2 a week during the months when his garden was producing. When the gardens are at their peak of production the families are able to use no more than a small percentage of what it produces. Unfortunately, there is little storing or canning of these perishable foods. None of the knowledge or equipment necessary for canning vegetables is available. Food experts claim that canning fresh vegetables requires a very high temperature in order to make them safe for keeping and consumption. In the high altitude here this would necessitate pressure cookers. These people have neither money to buy them nor knowledge of how to operate them. Fruit canned in glass jars is almost the sole product preserved. Only one family had canned or dried vegetables other than chili for more than 3 months of 1940. Four other families reported some canned or dried home-produced vegetables. (fig. 11). Home-produced lard potatoes, flour, chili, meal, fuel, dried corn (chicos), and soap are available to most of the families during most of the year. Products such as chili and lard must also be bought.

Although the term "commercialization" would mean little to these people, they have definite concepts about how machinery, coupled with large-scale farming, has affected them. They feel that this combination has been highly influential in making it more difficult to find work. One often hears the expression that machinery is now doing much of the labor that used to require men. Some of them know large farms in other States that at one time employed large numbers of men, but now use only tractors.

It is highly doubtful if commercialized farming is resented as such. It is the technological changes that commercialized farming has brought about to which they object.

Fig. 11

MONTHS IN WHICH PRODUCED FOOD AND FUEL ITEMS WERE NOT AVAILABLE TO FAMILIES, EL CERRITO, NEW MEXICO, 1940



SOME LARD, FUEL, AND SOAP AVAILABLE ALL MONTHS FOR ALL FAMILIES.

*FAMILY NO. 7 NOT INCLUDED. DATA NOT AVAILABLE.

If it could be felt that the benefits of commercialized farming were distributed in accordance with some standard of equality it would fit well into their philosophy of living. Apparently nothing in their standard of values would make taboo any technique or device for making life easier or richer.

The Farm Business

The total cash family income from farming operations varied from 0 to $3,000 in 1939. The incomes of the two largest farmers, from the sale of farm products, were greater than all others combined. None of the farmers could give accurate figures on their incomes and expenditures. Records of the farm business are not kept.

Little money is borrowed outside the village. To borrow money one must give security. The sole security these families have to offer is their land or livestock. But they usually refuse to mortgage the irrigated land, and credit based on the average farm operation would be practically worthless, as there is little cash income by which such a loan could be repaid.

Several years ago some of the people learned by painful experience the danger of offering their land as security for a loan that was expected to be repaid from outside sources. All know of families that lost their land when outside employment became so scarce that the loans could not be repaid. These losses have had their effect in El Cerrito. Today one seldom finds a mortgage or lien on the small irrigated holdings. These terms have become synonymous with loss and even eviction. Signing papers has come to be such a duel that Governmental agencies operating in this area are often refused cooperation because of the fear that giving adequate security might jeopardize land holdings. Any program that necessitates security or obligation meets with distrust.

An experience of one of the villagers with the Farm Security Administration illustrates the prevailing attitude. He borrowed a little less than $200 and gave his property in the village as security. Failing to produce enough on his land to pay the loan, or even interest on the loan, the following year he was threatened with foreclosure. After some time elapsed he was able to arrange to repay the loan from his WPA job at the rate of $2 a month. His brother remarked that this experience had taught him the danger of risking his property as security for loans. He said, "I would never risk losing my property in that way. That is the reason I want nothing to do with any Government program that operates by making loans. If I can't get the money without any strings tied to it, then I won't take it." One of the most appealing features of the works projects program is that participation entails no obligation on the part of the people.

These people have little interest in outside trade agreements and the current prices of farm products. No attempt is made to keep abreast of the fluctuations in the outside markets except the one big sheepman whose sole interest is in the current price of wool. Not a single farm journal or periodical comes into the village. Only a few bulletins dealing with farm products or farm practices are ever received and read. The people are not aware of the sources from which they might obtain them and few could read and understand them. The majority are printed in English, a language that only a few can read with any appreciable degree of understanding.

The County Agent is a stranger to the local people. It is doubtful if a single villager knows his name. No more than three of the families have ever attempted to use

his services. The majority would not know what he has to offer or how to go about getting his cooperation. The general opinion is that he exists only for the bigger farmers and stockmen, that he has neither the time nor the interest to help them with their problems.

The Role of Hired Farm Labor

Only three men in El Cerrito occupy the position of full-time laborer. They are employed by the one big sheepman. Others furnish labor during the busier part of the spring season but usually earn far more money working at other occupations. These farm laborer families live in the village and form an integral part of it. They are in no way discriminated against, in fact they are all in some way related to the man who employs them. All have their small land holdings in the valley and are descendants of early settlers in the village. Two of the full-time farm laborers are sons of former sheepherders who worked for the father of their present employer.

It seems fairly certain that most of the early differences that separated the large operator from the laborer have been destroyed. There is no longer the immense difference in worldly possessions that once separated the wealthy don from the lowly peon. The dependence upon the large operators for wages and maintenance has been shifted to other sources, as such operators have gradually lost their once vast holdings. Although still occupying a somewhat different role, both are now struggling for essentially the same thing; to prevent further retreat in the fight for survival. Often there is actually little difference in their real status. Although the former patron may still have his large flocks of sheep, they are being kept on a share basis or mortgaged at their full worth. There is little pretense about the situation. Laborer and operator alike are fully aware of what they have to face.

Transportation and Communication

The people of El Cerrito have limited means for contacts with the outside world. Roads are extremely poor, often impassible during inclement weather. There are no telephones and only two radios that function when the owners can afford batteries to run them. Two antiquated automobiles and two trucks of the same era transport the residents when they need to go into Las Vegas. Once in a great while a family will travel to town in a wagon. This involves almost a full day's travel over the 30 miles and another day to return--not only a long and difficult trip but a dangerous one as well. Sixteen of the miles must be driven over a much traveled highway that is hazardous because of passing automobiles on the many curves and turns through the hills.

A satisfactory system has been worked out with the available means of transportation to take the people to town as needs arise. The two important motives for going to town are to make purchases and to inquire about possibilities of employment. Passengers desiring a trip for pleasure or some equally unimportant purpose are given second preference by the owners of the automobiles. A set fee is charged for such transportation. If the owner of the automobile initiates the trip he is paid little more than the cost of gas and oil. If the trip is a special one the set charge is $3.00. There is seldom less than a capacity load of passengers. If the passenger list is not filled with those actually needing to go, others are willing to make up the deficit. It is not uncommon for these passengers to be charged less than the others. None ride free however. All are expected to contribute something.

Government Programs

The functions of all Governmental programs that directly affect the local people are common knowledge in El Cerrito. Despite its physical isolation from the outside world, knowledge of these programs quickly filters in. If a new Government project is initiated that might give work to additional men, the people of El Cerrito know of it almost as quickly as those living in town. This seems surprising when the poor means of communication, the limited transportation facilities, and the limited amount of English spoken and understood are considered. The explanation is puzzling unless the lines of communication between village and town are understood.

Knowledge of a new program comes first to the attention of relatives of villagers living in Las Vegas. These relatives learn of the programs and pass the news on to the people of El Cerrito when they come to town. In this manner the news quickly spreads to all who might benefit.

Knowledge of and interest in programs are limited to those from which the people may benefit. Any program designed for another purpose, or one that operates in a way which they do not approve, is soon forgotten. Such programs are never mentioned or discussed. Interest and discussion are centered solely upon those from which they may expect to gain some material benefit.

The Governmental programs of most common knowledge are the Works Projects Administration, the National Youth Administration, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Farm Security Administration (Rehabilitation), and the Agricultural Conservation Program. Any adult in El Cerrito would know something of the purpose of such programs, who is eligible, and the procedure of being certified. He would also be able to name any person in the village who is participating in the program and the benefits to the person. The participation of a family in a program is discussed freely and furnishes one of the most frequent topics for everyday conversation.

The benefits of the WPA program are the better known and most sought after of all the Governmental programs. Even the smaller children have a fair acquaintance with this program and are able to give their preference of projects to work on when they grow up. The regular procedure, as well as many unethical means of gaining certification on a project, is common knowledge to all. Knowledge of how best to gain admittance to the investigator is pooled and passed on to the beginner or the family head who is unemployed. The means are important only as they contribute to quick certification to work.

The popularity of this program rests upon two general principles. Probably the most important is that it pays a livable wage. It enables a family to return somewhat to the old pattern of living on a level that requires some cash. The second principle, and one only slightly less important, is that it entails no obligation on the part of the laborer. It offers money for labor done with no threat to personal or family possessions. Although such work is sometimes handed out in a condescending way the recipient is doing something to pay for it by exchanging his skill and labor.

Very few of the families would recognize the title of the Farm Security Administration but all are familiar with the term "rehabilitation." They know that the Rehabilitation Division makes loans to qualified farmers, asking a chattel mortgage as

security. In fact, all know the local farmers who have borrowed money for seed and equipment on such a basis. Such cases have become well-known examples of what not to do.

These people also know that the Rehabilitation Division will make direct grants to needy families trying to live at home. This last feature is the attractive one. The first is now taboo. Any man in El Cerrito will quickly point out the impracticability of borrowing money on the average local farm business. Those who did borrow on such a basis in 1936 claim to have done so under the impression that such loans were not to be repaid. All recognize the fact that their small holdings are subsistence units only and are convinced that, under any type of practice or management, they could not be so operated as to repay a loan. In the words of one of the men:

"The FSA gave me a loan about 3 years ago. That was a big mistake for me. The agent (county supervisor) didn't explain it to me very well. I thought that the program was to help me but they wrote me later that it was a loan and that I would have to pay it all back or lose my land. Sure gave me a scare. I thought I was lost and so did everyone else. I was getting ready to leave to look for a job to pay it back when the agent came out and told me it wasn't as bad as I thought. Said that I could have several years to pay it back. Don't know how I can do it. I have paid a little of it back but don't know when it will all be paid back. They won't get me to sign any more Rehabilitation papers. I won't sign any more notes."

The NYA and CCC programs are well liked. In certain respects they are regarded as serving the same purpose for the young people as the WPA program does for the adults. The difference lies largely in the educational possibilities such programs offer. One of the most important functions such programs serve, however, is to add to the family income. In many instances the income from these sources alone has enabled the family to live while the father was unemployed. If a family is fortunate enough to have both a girl and a boy in these camps simultaneously, the combined incomes are enough to afford the family a comfortable living. One of the local families was able to buy a small tract of land while the son and daughter were thus employed.

The sole objection to these programs is a general opinion that living in the camps for a year or more is likely to wean the young people away from their home village. They become accustomed to better living conditions and to having a certain amount of cash to spend for their own benefit and pleasure. After a year or two of this they are less satisfied to return to the village, where amusement and recreation is local and where cash to spend is almost impossible to earn. Many of the young people admit this. One of the young men who spent 3 years in a CCC camp said that he would never be satisfied again in El Cerrito. He plans to leave permanently as soon as he has an offer of a job on the outside.

These programs are very popular with the young people who are not yet old enough to apply. Brothers and sisters of those who are away in these camps readily state their desire to go as soon as they reach the proper age. They have heard of experiences in the camps and now are anxious to see and live through them. Another road has been opened to them. They may now expect to go to camp and then to a WPA project.

All the farmers that are eligible have participated in the ACP program. The two biggest farmers have built water reservoirs on their land and a few of the others have built smaller tanks or have been reimbursed for construction of rip-rap along the river

to prevent further washing away of the land touching its banks. This is another program that meets with local approval. It entails no obligation and offers a little remuneration to the men for doing what they realize should be done anyway. The smaller farmers feel that they have been discriminated against somewhat by this program but all have hope that next year, or the next, it may be altered so that it will reach them.

Questions about any Government program, other than those mentioned, bring a quick denial of any knowledge concerning it. Unless these programs in some way actually touch these people themselves, they have no interest whatsoever in them. Their concern deals solely with everyday life and what directly affects it.

Attitudes and Value-Systems Related to Land Use, Commercialization, Self-Sufficiency, and Governmental Programs.

Individual ownership of land has come to mean much more to the native of New Mexico than it did to his forefathers. Beneficiaries of early grants seldom attempted to get personal ownership or control over any large part of the land. They were satisfied with the right to use it.

This underemphasis on the importance of landownership undoubtedly played an important part in the rate at which the grant land of New Mexico has been lost. Sections of the grant land have been sold without the vendors realizing that use of the land was sold also. Huge tracts of surrounding public land have been transferred to private ownership with little realization on the part of the natives of what was happening until their livestock had been crowded back on remaining inadequate land.

The results of the rapid loss of this land have been to instill a grim determination on the part of the people to cling desperately to what still remains of the better land. Few would sell their irrigated holdings at anything like a reasonable price. All realize that any further decrease in their holdings would impel readjustment to an entirely new way of life.

Until recently, the term conservation has had little meaning for these people. Ample land or abundant work on the outside have always been available. Curtailment in both of these is bringing about a desire for and appreciation of better and more efficient use of the land that still remains in their possession. More of the land is being brought under cultivation. Some of the men are considering terracing to prevent further erosion. They realize definitely the need for scientific advice in combating insects and crop disease, and are anxious for advice and suggestions for improving crops and methods of cultivation. All are welcoming the efforts of the new agricultural agencies to improve and safeguard their land from which such a large proportion of their living comes.

Among all groups in El Cerrito there is marked regret that changes have been wrought in the old way of life, and an almost unanimous agreement that people were better satisfied and life more complete under the old conditions. Men who left the village during the 1920's for the high wages being paid for labor feel that they should have remained at home and made an effort to gain control of some of the outside land that sold for less than a dollar per acre. All feel that the families which homesteaded tracts on the surrounding mesa were the most fortunate and that if all the men in the village had done this they would not now have the problems that large stockmen and commercialized farming have brought them.

But surprisingly little resentment toward these new forces is found. The general opinion of the people is that the fault lies with themselves. There is little talk or thought of getting their former possessions back. Nevertheless, the more far-sighted among them are looking toward a solution that will begin with their present economic foundation and will, by some means, add enough to it to allow them to live at a level that will provide the essentials of food, clothing, and shelter for their families.

The statement is heard frequently in this part of the southwest that "the native people are perfectly satisfied with a WPA job. They are making more money than they have ever made in their lives." Such a statement is far from fact in El Cerrito. The people of El Cerrito are fully cognizant of what the WPA program is doing. They understand its good features and its bad ones. It is true that the monthly wage on a WPA project is greater than that which can be earned herding sheep. However, wages earned in a sheep camp are clear profit. A sheepherder is furnished his meals and lodging. There is no house rent to pay as in town, no coal to buy, and no transportation charges to and from work. His family lives at home where a garden and a small crop may be planted to supplement his wages. This is seldom possible if the wage earner is employed on a WPA project where he is almost forced to live in town.

If wages are computed on an annual basis the results show that the WPA laborer earns less, as a rule, than he formerly did on the outside. When work on the outside was plentiful and wages fairly good a man would probably earn considerably more working for farmers or for private industry. Providing a man had one or two sons to help him it was nothing unusual to earn 5 or 6 hundred dollars a year doing farm work. On the WPA he seldom earns more than 3 hundred. Frequent lay-offs and a maximum wage of approximately $45 a month may aggregate even less. One of the men states his own case as follows:

"The new government agencies aren't meeting the problems here very well. About all a fellow can do here is apply for a WPA job. These jobs just let you live. I have been working for the WPA, off and on, for a long time. During that time I have been able to work about 3 months at a time and then I would be turned off for a while. Lots of times I have been without money. I don't spend any money for pleasure, either. All of my money has gone for clothes for my family and something to eat. I have tried to save a little money on what I earn but I can't do it. We have tried to reduce our food bill but with our large family we can't do that. Our food isn't any too good, either, mostly beans, and sometimes just beans. I don't know how it is all going to come out. Do you think times will ever be any better? Sometimes I think they never will. It has been like this for a long time now. And what about the Government relief? I guess it might stop sometime."

Still, one hears the credulous argue that these people will come for miles if there is any possibility of their being certified for work. Such a statement gives no consideration to the fact that little other opportunity exists for them to sell their services. It is not a matter of choice, for there is no alternative. Those who are criticized for unwillingness to take private employment, once they are working on a project, are censured without consideration of what such an exchange would imply. Their hesitation to accept seasonal work from private sources comes only from the fear of delay in being reemployed on the WPA project. In a hand-to-mouth type of existence few feel justified in taking the risk. Experience has taught them the advantage of remaining eligible for this type of relief.

There is general appreciation of what the Agricultural Conservation Program and the Department of Public Welfare are doing. Any improvement of the land or any technique for conserving it is considered important. It is realized that such programs contribute to present and future welfare. Most of the people would favor their continuance on a much broader scope. Aid to old people, to those otherwise incapacitated, and to dependents are duly appreciated. The villagers realize that such aids are alleviating the problems of a group in which the well and able bodied are struggling desperately to survive. This has been a peculiar problem to the native people who have always felt a keen responsibility to care for aged and dependent relatives.

Although these people are accepting Governmental aid and subsidy with a sense of stoic fatalism, they universally recognize the fact that little is being done toward permanent stabilization. In case the present subsidy should suddenly cease they would be in no better position to live than when such aid began to come in. Their greatest comfort seems to lie in the hope that present aid will continue. They are determined to do all in their power to see that this is done, which means, essentially, to keep in power those who are in favor of maintaining the status quo.

What the people would actually prefer is a return to their old status of self-sufficiency and independence. How this might be done none seem to know or to be able to offer an opinion, except those who timorously suggest that the Government buy outlying sections of land. Even the boldest suggest no more than that the land be made available to them, with ownership remaining in the hands of the Government.

In this way one of the villagers gives voice to the general dissatisfaction with remaining dependent upon the generosity of the Governmental agencies. "The trouble here is lack of resources. If we could only get some of our land back. I have heard people say that the only thing to do is to leave us on the land and send us a certain amount of money each month. I wouldn't like that. I don't want things given to me. That ruins a man when things are given to him." Many claim that all initiative of the people is being destroyed. There is a feeling that the young people are particularly affected. One of the older residents of El Cerrito remarked that: "The young people here do not have the drive they once had. The young men used to look forward to having a fairly good home and a flock of sheep, gotten by their own efforts and initiative. This does not seem to be true any more. Instead he looks forward to a WPA job in town where he can depend upon the Government and the county politicians to support him."

It is relatively seldom, however, that a native voices open criticism of the functioning of a Government agency. There is a general feeling that humble acceptance and expressed appreciation is expected of any recipient. Any criticism of a program was usually given with the expressed desire that it should not reach the ears of persons administering the programs. The people have become too dependent upon such agencies as the WPA to afford the risk of being removed. This attitude has likely been responsible for the general belief that the native is perfectly satisfied if in some way, he is aided by relief or subsidy. Actually it is accepted as the sole means for surviving, the only source of obtaining today's, and possibly tomorrow's, bread.

THE COMMUNITY

Spatial Distribution

There is little feeling of interdependence between El Cerrito and its neighboring villages. Villanueva, 16 miles distant by automobile or 3 miles up river on foot, is almost the sole village ever visited and this is largely because of the services it has to offer. The Post Office is there and the people must go for their mail Limited trading is done there also, but far less than is done in Las Vegas There is mutual attendance at dances, which is a comparatively rare thing in this vicinity Kinship ties have been a strong factor in bringing the two villages into closer harmony.

But the present tendency is not entirely one of moving toward greater harmony Other and equally strong forces apparently are pulling in the opposite direction The inhibitions to greater coordination are rooted in a feeling of envy and jealousy toward the larger and more prosperous Villanueva. In turn the people of Villanueva regard those of El Cerrito as rustic and backward. These attitudes have obviously done much in the last few years to bring about a greater unity among the El Cerrito people than ever before existed. This attitude toward the Villanueva people is a general one and is definitely passed on to the offspring. Children are seldom permitted to go to the larger village and then only after special warning.

The remark is often heard that the people of Villanueva are unfriendly and quarrelsome. "They are always fighting among themselves for no other reason than that they like that sort of thing. All their dances have to be patrolled by the local peace officers. This never happens in El Cerrito. There hasn't been a fight here since I can remember." Statements such as these are heard often and clearly indicate how distinctly the local villages are separated.

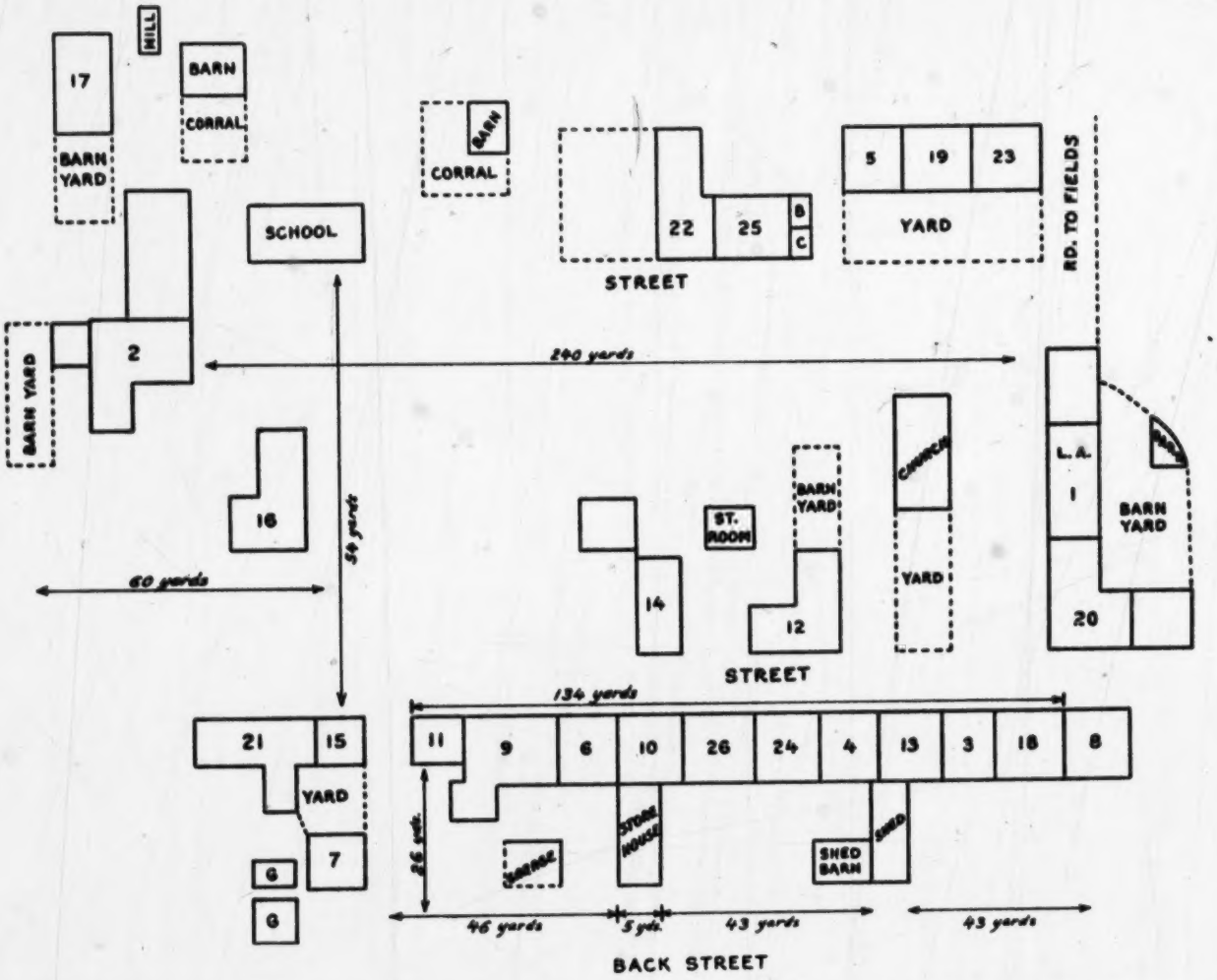
There is more cooperation in politics between the villages than in any other form of organized effort. The recently formed political clubs of young people in one party have done much to bring this about. During the last few years these clubs have gone so far as to have joint meetings. Candidates for county and State offices are often decided upon and given the joint support of the two villages. But perfect unison is far short of achievement in these clubs. The club in El Cerrito is still fearful that the larger representation from Villanueva will dominate it and thus injure its political strength.

Patterns of Informal Association

The physical structure of this community greatly facilitates cooperation and mutual aid. All houses in the village are within a stone s throw of one another

Fig. 12

LOCATION OF HOUSES AND BUILDINGS, EL CERRITO, NEW MEXICO, 1940



(fig. 12). Through years of interdependence, the people are conditioned to call upon neighbors and relatives for many types of assistance and, in turn, are expected to reciprocate when the need arises. Any task that requires greater strength or physical effort than a single family has at hand is solved by calling in a neighbor. Such service is freely asked for and given. In case of sickness or similar misfortune the efforts and resources of the entire village may be utilized in order to bring the family through the crisis.

Informal visiting far exceeds any other mode of contact between the villagers. The latchstring is "always on the outside" for any neighbor or relative who may have the time and inclination to call. In a single afternoon 14 different visitors were counted coming to one household, some of them returning as many as three and four times. This was not a peculiar case. Other homes in the village probably had as many. Such visits are expected. If a housewife fails to make a call in the afternoon it is taken for granted that she is ill or has company.

Although visiting is general in El Cerrito, the degree of blood relationship is the chief factor affecting their frequency. The house of the parents of several married sons and daughters is the nucleus for the different visiting groups. The wives and children of such families may come to the central house a dozen or more times in a day. They come to distribute a piece of news or to borrow a little something for the next meal. The children are continuously running into and out of each others' houses. They are together so much that it is difficult to learn to which house they belong.

It is not difficult to understand what these informal visits mean to a woman in these villages. Tied to a drab routine of household duties and child care she is allowed few means of self expression. Social censure prevents any activity outside the village or even in the organized social life within the village with the exception of attendance at church. Even conversation with the opposite sex, other than members of her immediate family, is denied her. Thus visiting among her own sex and status offers the most important means of expression open to her.

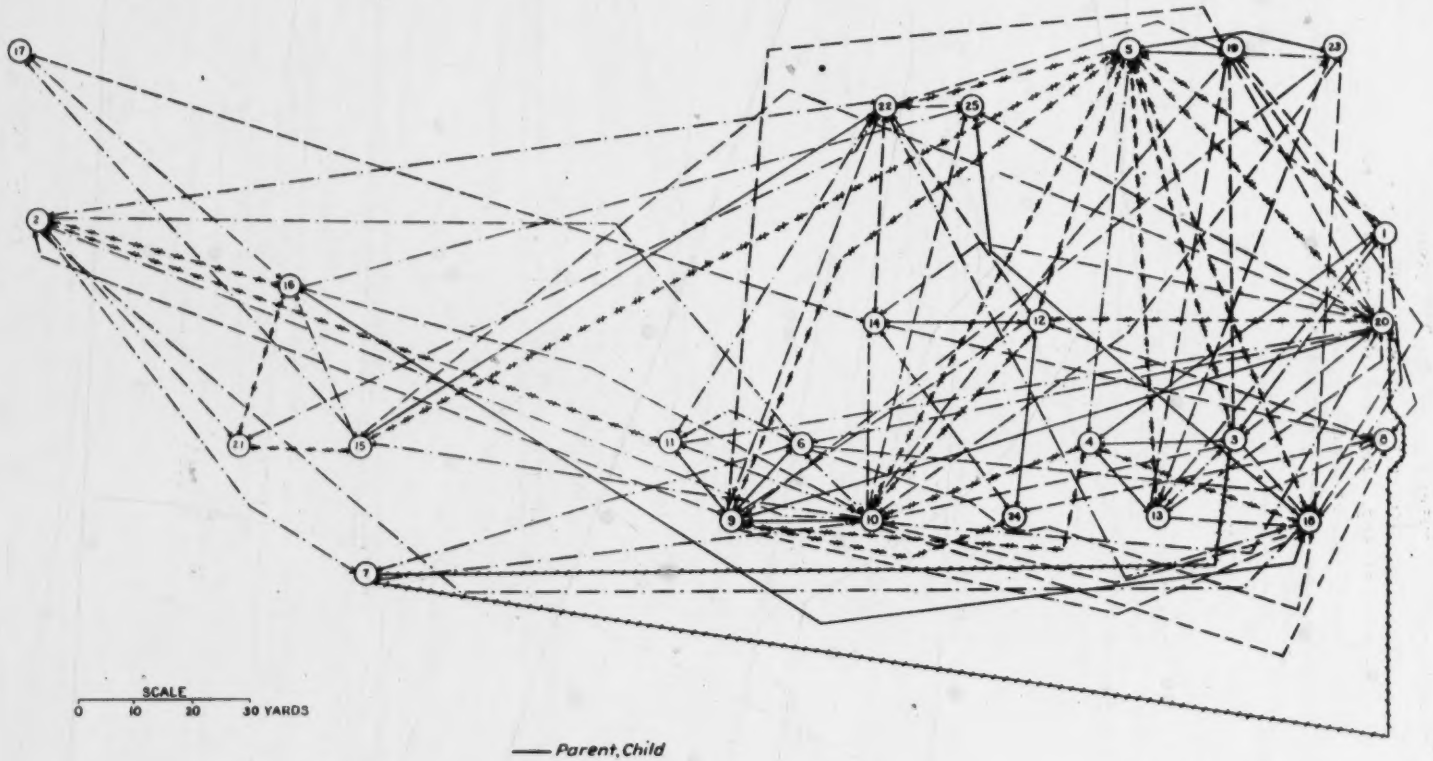
Although the visiting of the women far exceeds that of the men, each day affords them also a number of opportunities for conversation. After a day in the field is over they are likely to meet for a short time around the house or in going to and from the corrals. Also for the men there are other outlets, such as the field work, the local meetings, and the trips to town.

All the visiting done within the village is informal. It would be unusual for a visitor to announce his coming or even for the entire family to visit at one time. Only the most general invitations are given. A person is expected to feel welcome whenever he has the desire and the time to come.

In an attempt to describe this visiting a number of charts have been made. Figure 13 is a map of the village with circles indicating approximately the location of the houses and the visiting which goes on between the families. In this chart only the visiting of one parent and at least one other member of his or her family is indicated. This restriction was made to make possible a study of family visiting, thus eliminating the continuous flow of individuals, particularly children, who almost constantly pass in and out of the house.

Fig. 13

VISITING OF FAMILIES, EL CERRITO, NEW MEXICO, 1940



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An observer would be impressed by the fact that only 2 of the 108 lines between the circles representing the families do not designate some degree of consanguinity. This is not surprising when one realizes that practically everyone in the village is related to someone else, and that almost all degrees of consanguinity are represented. The closest degree, that of parent-child, occurs less frequently than the others simply because there are fewer parents than there are persons who can claim other degrees of consanguinity. Thirteen percent of the lines indicate visiting between parents and their children; 31 percent between brothers and sisters; 36 between cousins; 18 percent between nieces and nephews and their aunts or uncles. From this figure the conclusion might be reached that the degree of consanguinity was not important and that visiting was carried on more frequently between cousins than between parents and children. This would be a false impression made because the frequency of the visits is not represented in this figure.

In the remaining figures the families are represented by circles placed on the map with more regard to frequency of visitation and to degree of consanguinity than to original geographical location. Geographical location is completely disregarded in figures 14 through 18. Also, the degree of consanguinity is indicated by a symbol inserted in the middle of the line describing the frequency of the relationship. Figure 14 differs in construction from figure 13 in that figure 14 stresses the frequency of visitation, whereas figure 13 stresses only the degree of consanguinity and indicates by arrows the direction of the visiting, that is, whether or not visiting is mutual.

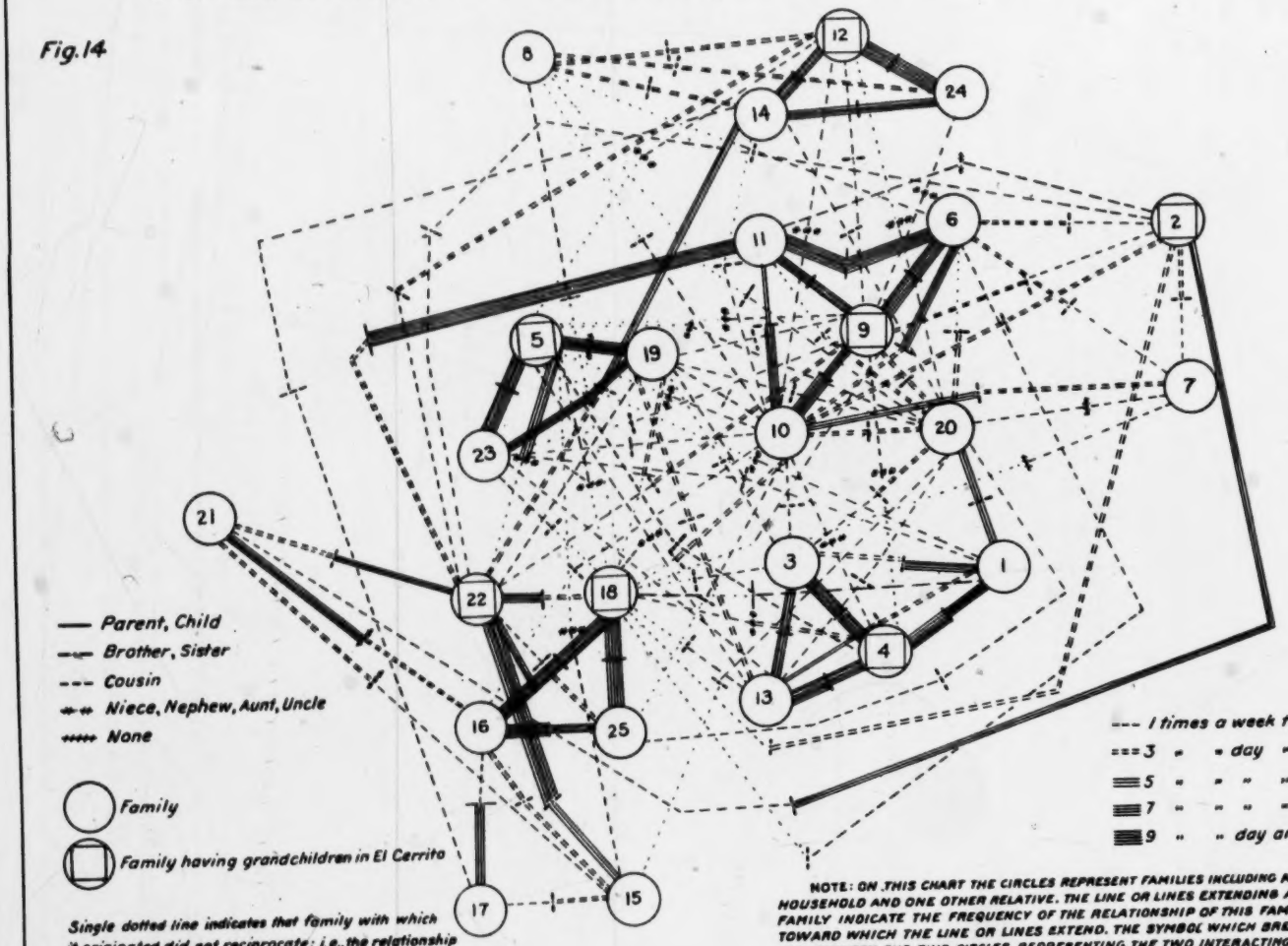
In figure 14 the important bonds in the village stand out. It is apparent that frequent visiting on a family basis is carried on chiefly between parents and children or brothers and sisters. Other relatives visit a great deal but the frequency is directly proportional to the degree of consanguinity. The figure also shows how the families respond to misfortune. The husband in the family represented by circle 18 is a blind man, 64 years of age. Few people in the village are visited by as many other families as is he, even though he is unable to return visits except to the families of his own three children. This is why so many dotted lines which indicate lack of reciprocation extend away from circle 18. As elsewhere, the personal element enters into the urge to visit. The head of the household designated by circle 5 is the oldest man in the village and also one of the most jovial. Many visit him because they enjoy his company and wit. All marvel at the vivacity of this dapper old man of 85 years.

The world over the taking of meals at the table of another's family signifies familiarity. This is true in El Cerrito. Those families which in the course of their visits, as represented in figure 15, stayed for meals at the visited family's home were in most cases closely related. Most meals were taken when visiting relationships were between parents and children or brothers and sisters. In fact, the families who took more than five meals together during the year and were of more distant kinship than father and child or brother and sister were negligible. Sharing food frequently at the same table during visits is an act which signifies close blood ties in El Cerrito, and the frequency of the act is positively correlated with the degree of consanguinity.

The coming and going of children of one family across the hearth of another is also almost a universal indication of close family ties, although it may be less so than the taking of meals during friendly visits. In large cities children may visit one another in homes where their respective parents have never been. In El Cerrito, as

VISITING OF PARENTS SHOWING FREQUENCY, EL CERRITO, NEW MEXICO, 1940

Fig. 14



NOTE: ON THIS CHART THE CIRCLES REPRESENT FAMILIES INCLUDING AT LEAST A HEAD OF A HOUSEHOLD AND ONE OTHER RELATIVE. THE LINE OR LINES EXTENDING AWAY FROM A GIVEN FAMILY INDICATE THE FREQUENCY OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF THIS FAMILY WITH THE FAMILY TOWARD WHICH THE LINE OR LINES EXTEND. THE SYMBOL WHICH BREAKS THE LINES EXTENDING BETWEEN THE TWO CIRCLES, REPRESENTING THE TWO INTERACTING FAMILIES, INDICATES THE CLOSEST DEGREE OF CONSANGUINITY EXISTING BETWEEN ANY TWO PARENTS IN THE TWO FAMILIES.

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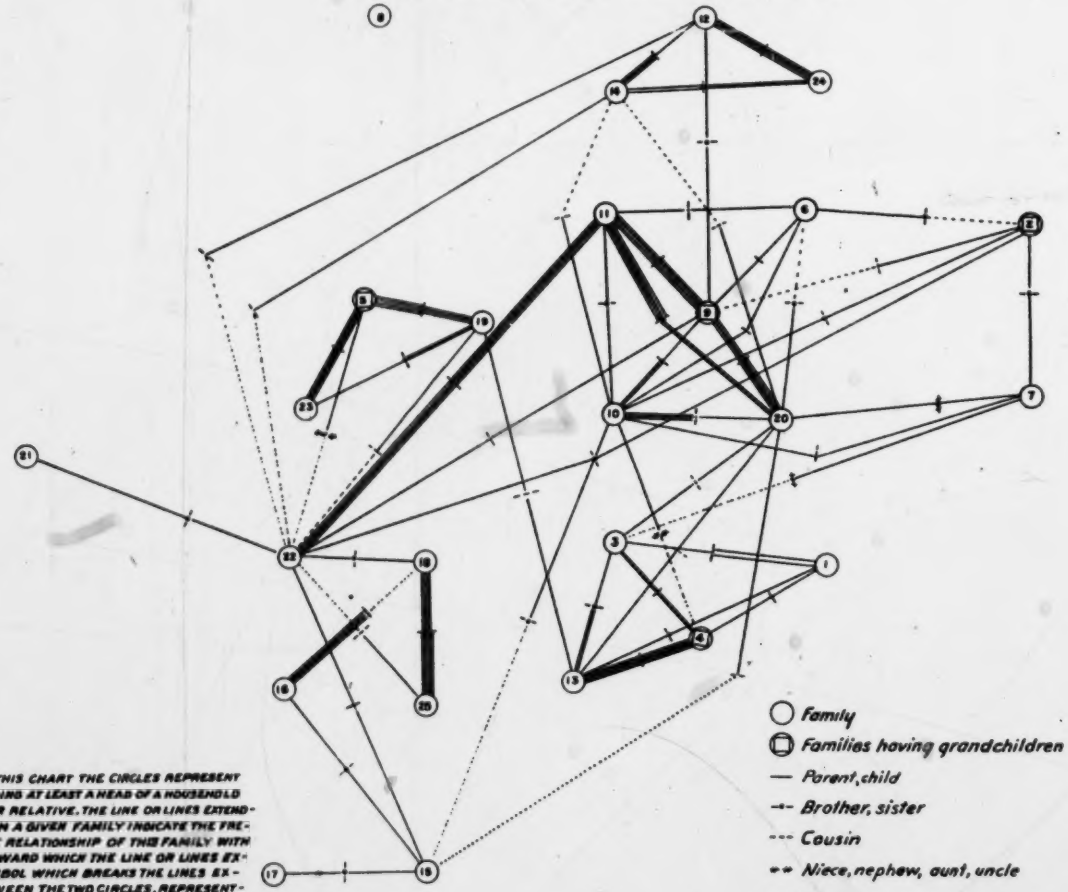
Fig. 15

FAMILIES EATING MEALS TOGETHER, EL CERRITO, NEW MEXICO, 1940



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- Family
- Families having grandchildren
- — Parent, child
- -•- Brother, sister
- --- Cousin
- •• Niece, nephew, aunt, uncle
- ···· None

- — 5.9 meals or less
- = 6 to 9.9 meals
- ≡ 10 - 14.9 meals
- ≡ 15 - 19.9 meals
- ≡ 20 and over

Dotted line indicates that family with which it originated did not reciprocate, i.e., the relationship is not mutual because this family did not take meals at the other family's house

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shown by figure 16 the frequency with which children and other separate individuals visit is directly proportional to the closeness of kinship. A study of the chart will show the great frequency of visits of children and separate individuals in the homes of the grandparents of children. Several of the grandparents have grandchildren, the sons and daughters of unfortunate parents, living with them. These grandchildren may return the visits of other grandchildren from other families. Some families are shown as almost isolated on figure 16. They are young childless families such as numbers 11 and 25. If the high frequencies of visitation of children as shown in figure 16 seem surprising, one should live with one of the families and attempt to learn which children belong to this family. Without asking or remaining for some time, it would be a real task. Nothing could be more informal than the visiting of the children but the frequency of the visitations are, for the most part, governed by kinship. However, geographical distance also plays a part. The children of cousins who live next door other things being equal, will probably visit more frequently than the cousins whose families live 200 yards apart.

Little visiting is done outside the village. This is especially true of the women, who seldom see a woman from the outside. The majority do not leave their own village more than once or twice a year.

Visits outside the village are usually to the homes of relatives in Las Vegas. Such a trip to town serves three purposes a chance to remain in town for a few days, a chance to make periodic purchases, and a visit with friends and relatives. This visit to Las Vegas may last for as much as a week. That these visits are seldom repaid does not matter. Such hospitality is accepted by both parties as a responsibility the town people owe to their country relatives.

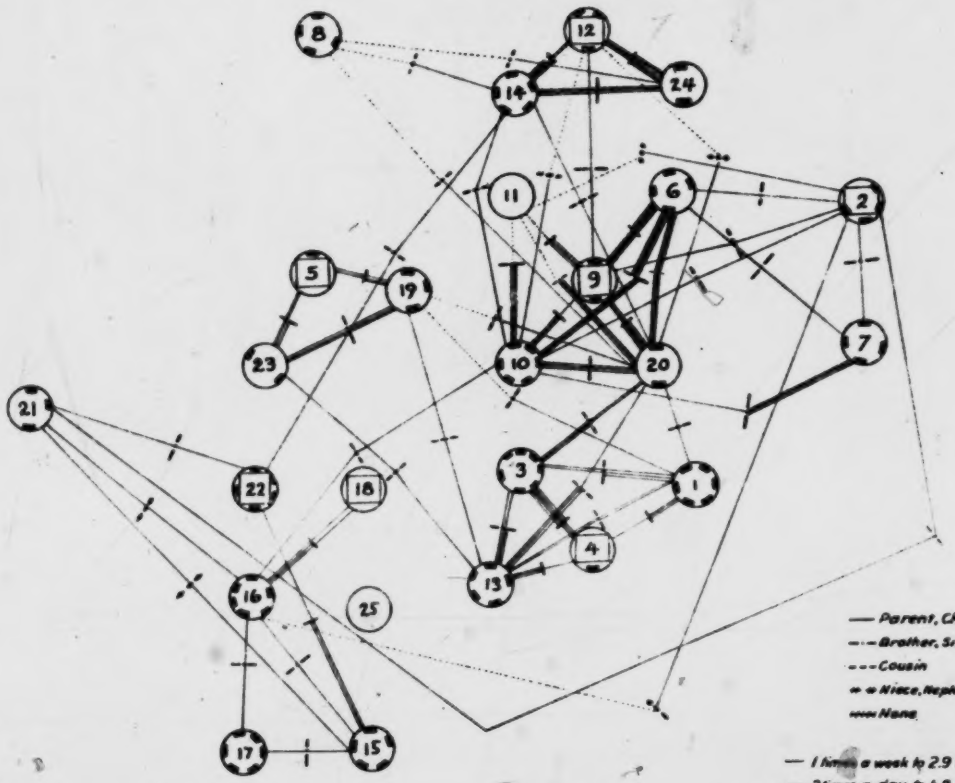
Isolation from the city markets and stores has made it necessary for these families to resort to considerable borrowing and lending. This applies particularly to items of food In case a family should use its supply of flour or lard before a ride to town can be arranged for, it is obliged to borrow. These loans are strictly, if informally, kept account of. Such courtesies could not be lightly regarded. They are repaid promptly after the first trip to town.

Borrowing and lending among the villagers is not limited to items of food. Farming tools and equipment are loaned freely. Brothers may buy tools together or they may buy different tools for the purpose of exchange. It is not uncommon for several distinct families to own jointly or severally only a single set of farm tools.

Figure 17 describes the frequency of the loaning of farm implements. Kinship ties stand out. Harvests are usually family affairs, the division of which is quite informal. For instance, in the case of families 3, 4, and 13, the father owns practically all the equipment. All work is done in common. There is a common wood pile, common barns, and common storage of crops and food. The son-in-law who owns most of his own equipment (family 1) and family 10 deal with this larger family chiefly through the head (number 4). However, family 19 deals directly with one of the sons (number 13), who owns some equipment in his own right. Other larger groups are more complicated. There is both common and pooled property. In the larger family, including the smaller families, 9, 6, 20, 10, and 11, the smaller families own so much equipment individually that no larger ring is drawn about them. There is much borrowing individually from the brothers even though the mother, No. 9, owns most of the land and

Fig.16

VISITING OF CHILDREN AND OTHER INDIVIDUALS EL CERRITO, NEW MEXICO, 1940*



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*Blocks within the circles represent the number of children within the family

Single dotted lines indicate that family with which it originated did not reciprocate; i.e. the relationship is not mutual because the family closest to the dotted line did not have children that entered the other home

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resources. Groups A, C, and D function in a more communal manner, although in each of these groups there is considerable ownership of and exchanging of implements by separate families.

Figure 18 describes the frequency of exchanging farm work, which also follows family lines. Some families do not participate because of the great age of the head, as is the case of Nos. 4 and 5, or because of infirmity as in the case of the blind man represented by circle 18, or because the male head is dead, as in the cases of circles 9 and 16

All of these heads are functional units in larger units which are outlined in the larger circles A, B, C, D, and E. They either direct operations or own most of the equipment with which the work is done. These large circles omit some families who function as parts of the larger families in other respects. For instance, the son-in-law (circle 1) of the head (circle 3) of the larger group (B) deals individually with his brothers-in-law 3 and 13 who do most of their work in common. The families in large circle D are practically mutually exclusive so far as exchanging work with outsiders is concerned, but the brothers 23 and 19 do not do all of their work in common.

Circle E is a much more complicated mixture of common and mutual labor. No. 20 is the school teacher, and No. 6, the son-in-law of the female head (No. 9) exchanges work independently with two brothers-in-law (Nos. 10 and 11) and his own two brothers (Nos. 2 and 7). But even with these variations the importance of kinship in these cooperative activities is manifold. This is true even though the village has also the lone-wolf type of family such as No. 8.

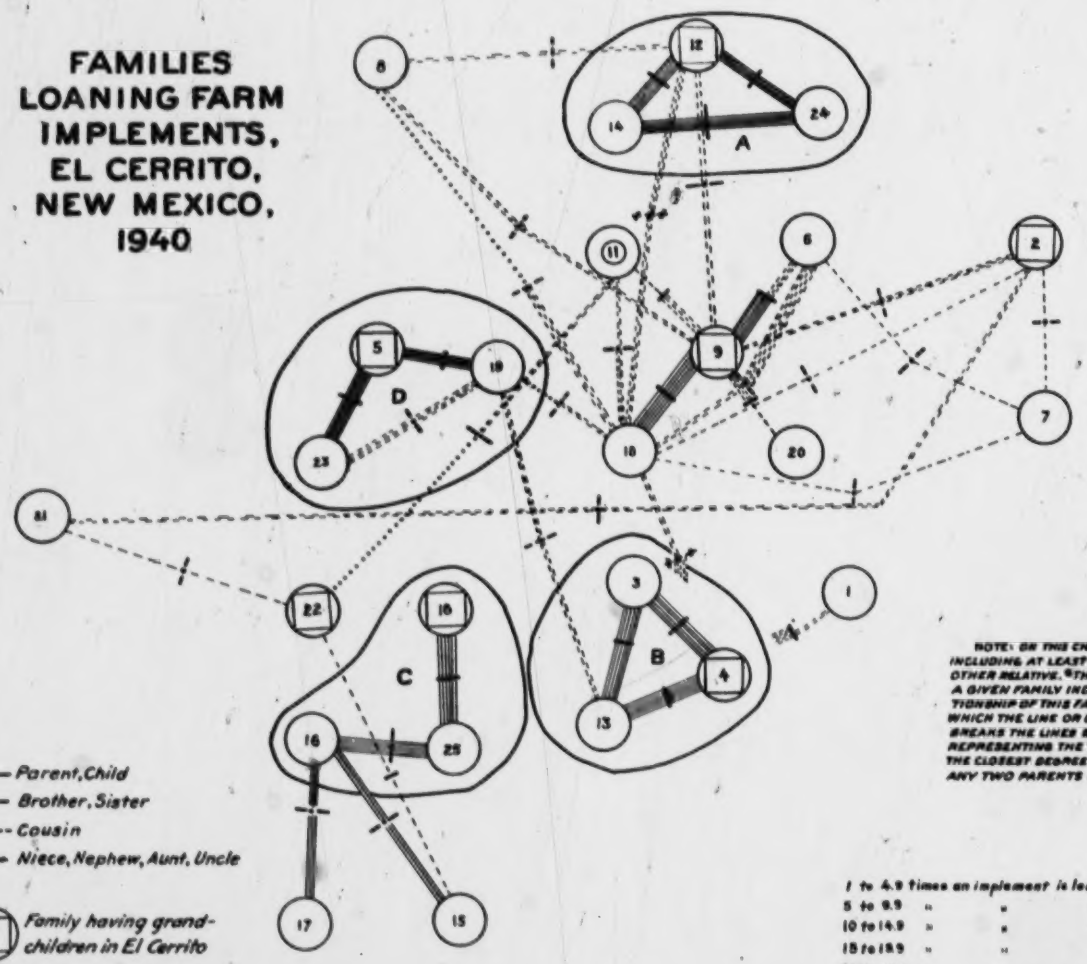
Figures 14 through 18 bear witness to the importance of familism in El Cerrito. The importance of these informal kinship groupings cannot be overestimated in any program designed to assist these people whether it is in their present village or elsewhere. As is emphasized later in this report the mundane leadership of the village is in the hands of the older men, the heads of the larger families. It is to them that those who wish to initiate new programs involving the village should go.

Resettlement of people from these villages where the land resources are too meager has been proposed. One family in El Cerrito is attempting to resettle itself, with great misgiving. It owns a ranch some 30 miles from the village, and the families of four sons are working and saving to restock the ranch so that the whole family can move.

For Governmental resettlement or rehabilitation schemes the fact must be borne in mind that it is the larger family of grandparents, children, and grandchildren with which the schemes should deal. This is clearly demonstrated by the preceding charts. To remove a single smaller family would frequently create hardships and in addition would increase expenditure for frequent visits back to the village. Smaller families than those which include the grandparents and the families of the sons should seldom be considered for resettlement in a new location. If the daughters' families, uncles, aunts, nephews, and nieces, and in some cases, cousins could be part of the group to be removed so much the better. In many cases the parental family would not even consider leaving the family of the daughter. Small familial rehabilitation cooperatives composed of several related families have been successful in their effort to rehabilitate in peace. Thus it is important that action agencies know the importance of familism in this culture.

Fig. 17

FAMILIES LOANING FARM IMPLEMENTS, EL CERRITO, NEW MEXICO, 1940



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— Parent, Child
-- Brother, Sister
---- Cousin
-·- Niece, Nephew, Aunt, Uncle

Family having grandchildren in El Cerrito

1 to 4.9 times an implement is loaned . . . . . .
5 to 9.9 " " " . . . . . .
10 to 14.9 " " " . . . . . .
15 to 19.9 " " " . . . . . .
20 to 24.9 " " " . . . . . .
25 and more, or most all implements used in common

Dotted line indicates that the family did not reciprocate.

* For instance, family 2 loaned implements to family 9 from 10 to 15 times whereas family 9 loaned implements to family 2 only from 3 to 10 times

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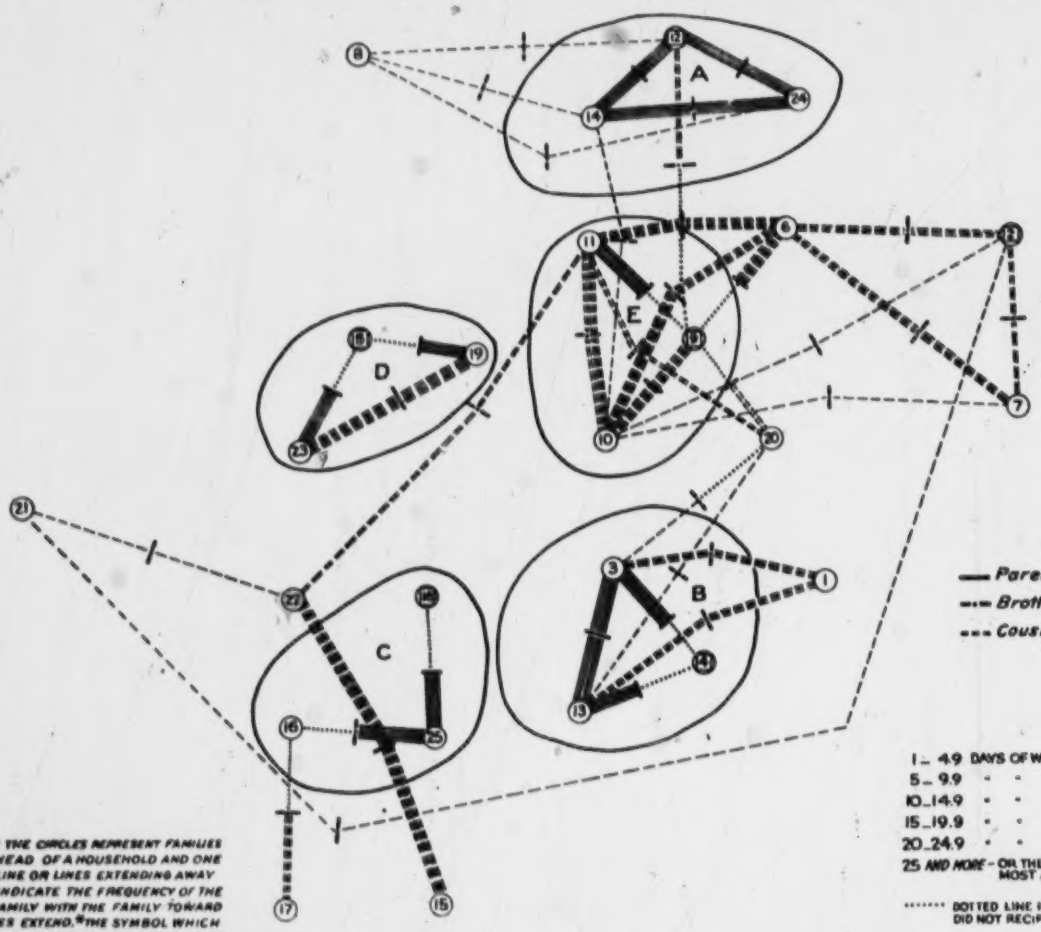
Fig. 18

FAMILIES EXCHANGING WORK, EL CERRITO, NEW MEXICO, 1940



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Recreation

Recreation in El Cerrito is limited to those forms that may be participated in for little or no cash. Money is neither available nor thought necessary for recreation or amusement. Activities that predominantly serve the purpose of recreation are local, devised by the residents of the village and for them. Most of them are old, both in type and the way in which they are conducted. The most common types are dances, going to town, attending political rallies, and fishing, listed somewhat in the order of their importance to the people.

The most popular form of group recreation is dancing. Each Saturday night a community dance is held in the local two-room school building. If a special event occurs such as a wedding, one or more may be held during the same week. They are held most often during the winter season when the people are least busy and a good attendance is most assured.

The standard cost of such dances is 25 cents. This money goes to the local Justice of the Peace for issuing the permit. The school building is given free of charge and the music, for the most part, is furnished by local talent. The usual instruments are a violin, guitar, and perhaps an accordion. The musicians play with evident enjoyment, as long as the dancers feel like continuing, which is often well into the morning hours.

Old and young alike attend. All the young people dance while the older ones sit back and keep time to the music with their feet. Although the music is usually fast and rest periods infrequent, each new tune brings the couples back for more.

The dance tunes are old Spanish folk music interspersed at infrequent intervals with selections of modern jazz. All prefer the old tunes. The dance steps are old Spanish such as the raspa, the polka, and the cuadrillo. The younger people are learning some of the more modern steps but still prefer the older ones. The older people do not attempt to dance, other than the Spanish steps and to Spanish music.

These Saturday night dances afford the young boys and girls their only opportunity of talking together. For this reason most of the dances are sponsored by some young man outside the village who has a girl friend in the village. It is the only sanctioned opportunity he has of speaking to her.

The boys are never allowed to take their girl friends to these dances. Instead the girls must come with a parent or an older married brother or sister. Even should the parents allow it, a young girl would not dare face the social censure of coming alone. She dares not even sit with a boy at the dance. All girls are expected to occupy one side of the hall and the boys another during the time they are not actually dancing.

For the older members of the group these dances serve still another purpose. They serve as a medium for airing any political view or conducting any business that concerns the group. It is generally recognized and never questioned that such a person has a right to stop the dance when he wishes and talk as long as he likes. If the wine is adequate and the audience at all appreciative he may stop the dance several times during the course of the evening for such speeches.

Going to town is one of the most popular forms of recreation. Next to the dances on Saturday night the men enjoy going to town on Saturday afternoon. Often they have no business motive, only to see and talk with friends in town. Even though business may take them to town, there is no hurry to return home once it is done. Going to town is a full day's affair.

Participation in political movements or rallies is another popular recreational activity. Any candidate for political office in this county is expected to be liberal in entertaining his constituents. Any candidate who refuses to sponsor a few free dances and to treat his followers to a beer or glass of wine has little hope of winning. These generous affairs are extremely popular and residents of the most isolated villages are sure to come in for their share. Even though the campaign is conducted for an office that does not directly affect the rural people this is no inhibition to their taking part. The candidate appreciates this for he knows that such people have many relatives whose support he may be able to get through his generosity to their rural friends or kinsmen.

Aside from a little fishing done by a few of the villagers, these are the principal types of recreation. There is neither the means nor the opportunity for participation in movies, sports, and other forms of recreation that cost money apparently little regret on the part of the people that such fields are not open to them. Those who are heard to express desires for these things are the young people who have been away in the CCC or NYA camps.

Artificial means for recreation are as lacking for the children as for adults. The school has never been able to provide for such common playground equipment as swings, slides, or even a ball. All games are spontaneous or invented through the childrens' imaginations. These games are not supervised. The child is free to play at any game or with any group he chooses or, if he prefers, does not play at all.

Patterns of Formal Association

The family is the basic channel through which all organized activities must flow. The success of any organized activity depends largely upon the degree to which it fits into the pattern of the family group. The strength of the church in this area can be explained partly by the degree to which it has recognized the solidarity of the family group and has effectively used this solidarity to crystallize and perpetuate its own tradition. The family is able to practice what the church teaches. Each supports and strengthens the position of the other.

A child's status in the family is taught at a very early age. Children soon know their functions as individuals, their relations to other family members and their duties and responsibilities to the group. At three a child knows that it is his duty to obey older brothers and sisters. Children are especially conscious that age is always to be respected and must occupy the seat of honor at every occasion.

The individual is still an integral part of the family group after childhood days are over and he is out from under the parental roof. The difference in his position is that he is now married and has thus taken on a new set of responsibilities. He is still expected to give material aid to aged parents or to any dependent brother sister, or their children. He is expected to attend and possibly help support numerous

family functions. In case of a family reunion, first communion, marriage, or death, his presence is assured unless distance or personal misfortune is great enough to justify his staying away.

When a child takes first communion all near relatives are expected to attend. The father, who may be working away from home, will travel a long distance to be present. Brothers and sisters of the child's parents may incur a relatively large expense to come. The number of relatives present at such an occasion is recognized as a good index of the family's prestige in the area. To one first communion observed in El Cerrito, relatives came from as far away as Trinidad, Colo. A father of one of the boys taking first communion said that it was his first trip to the village in more than a year. The Communion Service has been worked out with local modifications. One of the unusual features is the march around the church building after the service is over In this march the parents of the children are given the places of honor next to the children, and immediately behind the priest. After the service, which takes place in the morning, visiting relatives sit down to well-prepared dinners.

Marriage is another function which brings the family members together. This is an occasion for fun and merrymaking, and everyone has a good time. Food, drink, and music is furnished by the bridegroom, who has likely been saving his money for the event for the last year or more. The bride's family, too, may spend years accumulating enough money to pay for things that are thought necessary for the wedding, including dresses, large and expensive portraits of the bridal party, and church expenditures. Both bride and groom endeavor to bring as many relatives as possible to the wedding. It is considered quite an honor to have a good representation of relatives at such an affair.

A death in the immediate family will occasion a greater expenditure of money and effort to be present than any other event. Following a death a wake is held for one or more nights to enable all friends and relatives of the deceased to pay their last respects. Any near relatives feel an acute sense of duty to be present to welcome the visitors. In this way they are doing the deceased a last honor. It also is interpreted as an expression of sorrow at the passing. The whole village mourns for several weeks, but it is the grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews who mourn for the remainder of the year. During this time no music should be played, no dances, or theaters attended.

The School

The school building in El Cerrito is an antiquated, two-room adobe structure that was evidently built with little more than a certain amount of space in mind. The furnishings and equipment are in keeping with the building. The lighting arrangement is very poor and the heating system consists of two wood stoves that burn intermittently

This crude building houses from 20 to 50 pupils in addition to the two teachers Instruction is given in grades one to eight inclusive. The school is conducted with little supervision from the county system. Roads are too bad and the distance too great for a supervisor to visit except on very rare occasions. It is much more convenient to visit the larger and better equipped schools near the highway or on more passable roads.

The functions of the El Cerrito school involve no other persons than the teachers and the enrolled children. Parents are neither consulted nor are they willing to offer anything in the way of criticism or support. On two occasions during the year they attend a school function. One is at the end of the school term and the other at Christmas time. On each of these occasions the children produce a short play. El Cerrito has never had a Parent Teachers Association or any other organization purporting to bring about closer harmony between parents and school. The Principal of the school has never attempted to organize any activity that would improve his working relationships in the community. In fact, his training and background would be far from suitable for such an endeavor. He was born in El Cerrito and attended the local grade school. Four years of high school and a summer term of college in Las Vegas completed his training.

Despite its condition the people regard this school as one of the most important institutions of the community. It is felt to be serving the purpose of orientating children to the outside world and to some extent to be bridging the gap that separates the two. Although few parents expect their children to complete more than eight grades of school, this minimum is considered essential. Any less would not give the pupil the necessary working knowledge of English.

Few opinions are expressed as to how or what the schools should teach. Other than English and arithmetic there is little consideration as to what the children are learning. It is keenly felt, however, that the primary function of the schools is to teach English. It is realized that if the native is to compete with the ever increasing number of Anglos, a first essential is to speak good English. This necessity is given great emphasis by the older people, who tell many stories of business deals with the Anglo in which their interests suffered because of an inability to speak English. So, if the schools do a satisfactory job of teaching arithmetic and English the people are satisfied. The remainder of what a child should know can be taught by the church and in the home.

Attendance at school is poor. The girls report a much more regular attendance than the boys, especially in the higher grades. After a boy has reached the age of 12 or 13 he is expected to aid in supporting the family and is often kept out of school to help the father or to hire out to anyone needing his services. For this reason few of the boys complete the eighth grade unless they do so at a very early age. It is not uncommon to see a boy 16 or 17 years old still in the fourth or fifth grade.

Despite the desire of the parents to have their children learn English well it is seldom that a local boy or girl attains any degree of proficiency in it. The girls usually speak it much better than the boys because of their longer and more regular attendance at school.

Poorly trained teaching personnel in these isolated rural schools is another basic reason for the children s meager education. Usually natives themselves the teachers are inadequately prepared and are often unable to speak English correctly. Although a State law requires that nothing but English be spoken in the schools this regulation is not adhered to. Knowledge on the part of the children that the teacher understands Spanish tempts them to speak it. In case they cannot make themselves understood in English they are likely to use their native tongue.

FIG. 19. *English is spoken only in the school, El Cerrito, New Mexico, 1940.*

In addition, teaching techniques and materials are not adapted to the peculiar problems met in the local school situation. The sole means for imparting knowledge is the group of standard textbooks. Any other equipment is devised by the teachers and fashioned out of cans, boxes, and other crude materials at hand. No consideration is given to the fact that the pupils are learning a new language in addition to stock material which they are expected to master. Such subject matter as geography, history, and health is taught in terms that are foreign to them. During the school year 1939-40, the pupils of El Cerrito worked out posters and other projects based on such subjects as transportation in Boston and the importance of navigation in the growth of Chicago. Under such a curriculum as this it is small wonder that pupil interest is at a minimum and that progress is slow.

The Church

The people of El Cerrito are 100 percent Catholic. The church and its teachings play a tremendously important role in the attitudes, practices, and everyday life of these people. It is the earnest desire of every individual to live entirely within the doctrine of the church. The priest of the village is recognized not only as the spiritual leader of the community but as a source of advice and community leadership. He is expected to be interested in and to help map procedure for any economic problem affecting his parish. Religion offers these people hope in a world that has become increasingly difficult and uncertain, and this sanctuary is completely dominated by the local priests.

On a visit to one of the local priests mention was made of the important role the church plays in local rural life. To illustrate his point, the priest brought out a letter he had just written to a local government agent in reference to a salary check a local native had received. The amount of the check was less than the native had expected, and he had asked the priest to write the agent a letter stating his case. Said the priest, "The poor fellow is faced by a situation he does not understand and his only recourse is to the church. One of the mistakes of many of the local agencies is to disregard the influence of the church on these people. If we (church and agency) could only work together on local problems, cooperation from the people would be much easier to secure."

El Cerrito has no resident priest. The village is too small to support one. The usual parish in this area covers from 6 to 10 of the villages, depending upon their size and accessibility. The priest that serves El Cerrito lives in Villanueva. He comes once a month to give the mass and hear confessions. In case of a death or similar emergency he may come more often, but the average year would necessitate no more than two or three extra visits. Absence of the priest, however, does not mean that services are not held. The people meet each Sunday and sometimes as frequently as every day of the week to say the Rosary. These extra services are in charge of a local woman who is selected and paid a small sum of money by the church.

The services are conducted in a very humble spirit. The women seat themselves on the benches and the men kneel on the hard floor in the rear of the church. The attendance is usually good. There are never more than a few who are able to rationalize staying away. All present take part in the service. The hymns and ritual that are part of the service are well learned, even by the small children.

After the services are over the men meet in front of the church for a half-hour or more of conversation. This is as much a part of the service as any of the formalized ritual. Such meetings afford the men their most frequent occasion of getting together in a group. The conversation is directed to the entire group. The topics are local happenings or any news a recent visitor has brought back from town. The group never breaks up until each man who has something to offer has had his say.

The church apparently is lenient as to its financial support. Each family is assessed an equal sum regardless of its size or status. Although contributions are often requested in addition to the set fee, the amounts given are very small. Most of the families estimated their total contributions to the church for a year at approximately $3.

FIG. 20. *At worship—all villagers are devout Catholics, El Cerrito, New Mexico, 1940.*

In addition to the regular services the village holds each year a community function in honor of its Patron Saint. This function is held in December and lasts for 2 days. Elaborate rules and procedures have been worked out to govern the affair. Although the villagers sponsor and conduct the function, the priest is invited to attend as the guest of honor.

Two leaders are elected each year to be responsible for the conduct of the function. It is their duty to invite the priest, to provide the food and drink, to open their homes to accommodate the guests, and to supervise any other details of the affair. It is considered an honor to hold one of these posts, and a man regards himself as fortunate to be elected. The term of office is for a year. One of the first things accomplished by the leaders at the function is the selection of their successors for the coming year. No one man is expected to serve 2 years in succession.

These functions begin on the eve of the Patron Saint's birthday. Food and drink have been prepared in large quantities and spread out in the houses of the two church leaders who were elected at the function the year before. Visitors file in and out of the houses at will, partaking of the feast at their pleasure. This continues until late in the afternoon, when everyone marches to the church for mass. After the mass is over

they come back to the houses, where they may again take food and drink if they so desire. The last feature of the evening is the dance, which is conducted in the usual way. The second day is merely a duplicate of the first.

Farm Organizations and Cooperatives

No farm organizations are found in El Cerrito. Such organizations as are common in other sections of the country would hardly be applicable to the small local farm business that exists in this area. Several years ago the County Agent organized a 4-H Club for the boys and girls but it was short-lived. Good livestock proved too difficult to buy and maintain.

The one local cooperative enterprise is an old one. Its function is to clean, repair, control, and maintain the irrigation system. No one knows how old the association is, but it has probably been in existence since the valley was first settled.

It is called simply the "Ditch Association." Each family owning or operating land in the valley is eligible for membership. There are no cash fees or dues; instead, it is maintained through contributions in labor. The officers of the association are a ditch boss or mayordomo and three members of a ditch committee. The duties of these officers are well defined. The ditch boss is expected to inspect the main ditch at regular intervals and to call out the men when repairs or other work need to be done. He supervises the annual cleaning of the ditch, his only compensation being that he does not have to do any of the actual labor himself. The members of the ditch committee make any new rules for the regulation of the association and see that the old ones are enforced. It is their duty to distribute the irrigation water according to supply and need. These officers are elected each year at a meeting of the entire village. In many villages the offices carry considerable prestige but in El Cerrito this is not true despite the responsibility attached to them. They are considered rather a duty and are passed around equitably.

This association functions with a high degree of efficiency. One hundred percent cooperation is demanded and usually given. Severe reprisals are certain in case of failure to cooperate. A violation of the code of the association may mean suspension of water rights or heavy penalties in the form of labor. No one dares remain away when the ditch is being cleaned, unless he is able to send someone to represent him

Labor is contributed in accordance with the area of land operated. In El Cerrito a man is assessed 1 day's labor for each acre of irrigated land, which is adequate to maintain and clean the ditch in a normal year. In case of any disaster that necessitates additional labor the work is again distributed in accordance with the area of land. As it actually operates, the majority of the men work until the job is completed, the larger land operators compensating the others in some way for work done over their quota.

Local Politics

The term "Government" conveys a variety of meanings to the local people. In the last decade the term has taken on a much broader meaning than before. Previously Government was regarded as something foreign to them and to their interests. It dealt with situations, rights, and privileges that were complex and far removed from their everyday life.

Since that time the term "Government" has taken on new meaning. It has come down into their communities and into their homes, bringing such material substances as food, clothing, and work. It has become a source on which day-by-day they are more increasingly dependent.

As the functions of Government have become so much more important to their existence, interest and participation in politics have been expanding. Although Government may be the source of relief and public works, politics governs the machinery by which these are made available to them. Thus the feeling has grown up that a person s benefit from a Government program will be in direct proportion to his interest and participation in politics. One must be "in" with the "politicos."

As a result of this attitude toward politics a candidate for any office is appraised in terms of "what can he do for us." Political, moral, or religious principles are of secondary importance. His attitude toward National or State issues concerning such factors as business or labor are passed over lightly. Instead he is measured in terms of the number of jobs and the amount of grants and relief he has obtained for his constituents. These are what matter.

Much of the machinery for operating local politics is old. Office holders and new candidates still court and retain the good will of their constituents by means of free dances, free drinks, and now and then a fiesta. Priests still urge their following to vote for candidates whom they think will best follow and promote the interests of the church. To this machinery has recently been added many small clubs through which the people are able more directly to make their strength and needs known.

Predominant in this field have been the political clubs with membership drawn from the younger people. These clubs are operating in most of the little villages with their own elected officers and membership. In these meetings the local men are able to discuss their political problems in their own way.

The village of El Cerrito is peculiar in this area in that it has no acute local political problems. The fact that the village has no factions enables the people to work in unison. This is true of only a few communities in San Miguel County. In the typical situation two distinct factions work at cross purposes in every situation. Because of the resulting friction, local political issues are on a par with or of more importance than county or State issues. The broader issue may be forgotten in a desire to thwart the purpose or objective of a rival local group.

Any political meeting or rally in one of these local villages incites a great deal of enthusiasm and draws a good attendance. Each village has its well recognized best speakers who are always present to talk at great length and in flowing terms of their favorite candidates. Such meetings are dynamic affairs thoroughly enjoyed by all present. The political issue or candidate is often completely lost sight of in the light of a passionate and dramatic speech. Such speeches are remembered and discussed more from the standpoint of presentation than from content.

Leadership and Class Structure

The old class structure which existed for so long in rural New Mexico has virtually disappeared along with the economic basis that supported it. The dons of the local villages who once owned all the cattle, controlled surrounding land, and employed

the other residents, have disappeared along with their holdings. It is only in the most isolated instance that such a situation is still found to exist. The preponderance of class difference that still exists in New Mexico is found in the towns and cities or between the town and rural people.

Although the leveling process involving holdings contributed most to the breakdown of the once vast gap that separated the peon from the dons, other factors were at work. Not least important was the degree to which all the families of the village became interrelated through marriage. A son or other member of the don's family frequently selected a mate from the class below. This practice was encouraged among the lower class and was seldom given more than slight consideration by the don. As the status of the wealthy families declined this fusion assumed a more rapid tempo. At present there seems to be little, if any, social distinction between the owners and those who work for them. Prestige and respect in the community has come to be based on an entirely new set of factors. Sons and daughters of the once great Patron of El Cerrito have married into families that once would have been considered far below them.

Little real difference is found in the economic status of the families in the majority of the native villages. Although a family may still have sheep or cattle and follow somewhat the pattern of the old don, his land and livestock may carry a mortgage for its full worth. His material wealth and that of the laborer who works for him differs little.

In many of the larger villages this change has not been so complete. There may still exist in some of them a semblance of the earlier pattern. In such instances it is likely that the wealthier families control not only the sources of labor but the greater part of the commerce and business of the village as well. Thus the old village structure is being supplemented and supported by a new set of factors that were necessary to keep it from crumbling.

Although maintaining some sort of working relationship with the local people such families are likely to be almost as much a part of the neighboring towns. They take active part in politics and mingle socially with the town people. In such cases wealth may be the sole determinant of the family's social status But as a rule these families are the decendants of the old dons who once were in such complete control.

This class distinction is never carried to an extreme. One of these wealthier families would not dare incur the general opinion that they considered themselves in a higher class than the other villagers. Such a mistake would play havoc with his local business. Almost any native would go to endless trouble and effort to carry his trade away from a family whose members seemed to him to consider themselves superior.

Since the breakdown of the old system, the native villages have been looking more and more to the outside for leadership and guidance. In conjunction with their increasing dependence upon the outer world has come a realization of the inadequacy of leadership in their own. The old sources of leadership are felt to be no longer competent to meet present-day problems. This does not mean that the old pattern of leadership has been entirely discarded. The judgment and influence of certain individuals in the village are respected and recognized. But the influence of such individuals is limited to the local situation. One of the young men stated the situation in terms of his own orientation.

"I don't think there is a real leader in the village. There are some who are older and have more experience than others. I would appreciate their advice more than that of others, but they are not actually leaders. That is part of the trouble with this town today. We need people upon whom we can depend for advice. In this village every one is alike. There is no best farmer or best business man. Everyone is in the same situation. If we want advice about a Government program, about schools, or about farming we go to someone in town. Personally, I go to friends in town for advice about anything important."

In this statement are two indications of the change that is obviously going on. The first, as mentioned above is the feeling of the inadequacy of the old pattern of leadership, that it is no longer effective or meeting present-day problems. The second is a shift toward the town for leadership. This second change is being effected through two different channels. One of these is the ever-increasing dependence upon town friends and relatives for information about available work and relief and the procedure to follow in getting either. Because of broader contacts the town people are recognized as better informed and more qualified to give advice than a resident of one of the rural villages. A second impetus toward the change in the source of leadership for these villages is the power of the county politicians who, rightly or wrongly, are thought to control effectively the sources of public relief and employment. Any job on a public works project is first cleared through these offices. In some measure these men have come to take the place of the dons under the old system.

The old pattern of leadership operates strictly within the village. Such individuals as form the pattern in the community are depended upon for advice and leadership in local situations. These people are seldom dynamic leaders in the sense that they initiate and carry out definite programs. Their influence is much more potent in influencing community sanction or disapproval of what already exists.

Qualities that determine leadership in these communities are comparatively few in number, yet are well recognized. The three dominant ones are age, family, and the ability to express oneself fluently, listed in the order of importance. These factors are not entirely independent. A combination of two or more, such as age and family would far outweigh age alone.

Age is considered the most important quality in a leader because it is felt that age and experience go together. But more is involved than this. The native culture gives great weight to age alone. One of the most serious violations of local social custom would be to ridicule old age or an elderly person. This is one of the things that definitely is not done. Age occupies the seat of honor on all occasions and ever has the right to be heard. All recognize that age alone gives tremendous weight in any declaration or statement.

Status in a family group gives prestige and hence is important in leadership. Family loyalty impels one to give credence to advice or comment from a member of the family. Age becomes a much more powerful quality in leadership if the individual is a member of the family. Young men who were asked about leaders in the village invariably gave the names of elderly persons in their family group. An aged father who has relinquished his possessions to his sons still remains in charge of the operation of the lands or livestock. His authority is recognized, with little thought of contradiction, either in thinking or in practice. That the parents know best is an often-repeated adage throughout the Spanish-American culture.

The ability to express oneself well before an audience is perhaps the most important personal quality for leadership. Anyone who can speak well before an audience commands a great deal of admiration and respect. This is especially true in politics, where such an individual has frequent occasion to exercise this ability. In discussing the leadership qualities of the local president of one of the political clubs, it was always pointed out that he was a good speaker. "He keeps well informed about the political situation and he has no trouble in telling an audience about it."

Although other qualities undoubtedly are appreciated in local leaders those mentioned are by far the dominant ones. Although other qualities might well be given weight in the choice of leaders, these are largely ignored by the local people. The one young man who is by far the best informed in the village is definitely not recognized as a leader. He realizes this and admits that it is largely because he has little ability or desire to make his ideas felt and heard.

Youth as the Critical
Age-Group of the Community

The young people of El Cerrito are becoming increasingly aware of their limited opportunities at home. This is in part due to participation in recently established Government agencies for the young people and in part to the influence of the older peoples' opinions upon them. Both are making themselves felt in ever greater intensity.

One of the local boys who is now in the CCC camp gave a frank summary of his case. "I have been in the CCC camp for almost 3 years. It was the first time I had ever been away from home except one summer when my father and I went to Texas to pick cotton. I like it in the camp very much. I have learned more during my 3 years in the camp than I did in all the years I went to school. These camps are a great help to the local boys. I have learned to speak English fairly well and how to do several kinds of skilled work. When I get out of camp I am not coming back to El Cerrito unless there is no work in town." Two other local boys who have been in the CCC camp are now working outside the village. Both stated a preference for living in town.

The older people are not concerned about the new tendency on the part of a few young men to leave El Cerrito. They regard such a move as advantageous because it alleviates the pressure of population at home, and feel that the movement should be encouraged as much as possible. Under present conditions they see no other solution to the overcrowded situation than making jobs available in town for a large number of the local young men.

These opinions are being freely distributed to the young people. The father of two boys, ages 18 and 19, is expecting them to leave El Cerrito in the very near future. "I tell them that there is not any future for them here, that they must go to Las Vegas or some other place where there is at least a chance to get work. I have taught them as much as I could about how to find a job. They know how to do several different kinds of work. So I am sure that they will be able to find a job."

Many of the young people show a surprising amount of confidence concerning their ability to obtain work outside the village. Much of this is obviously due to the influence of the CCC and NYA camps. Those who have gone come back and talk of the ease of learning skilled work and the better pay that goes with it.

Boys who have gone to the CCC camp are definitely the heroes of smaller children of the village. The children are never tired of hearing of their adventures and experiences. They hear of life in a modern world full of new, even strange, wonders. Stories and descriptions that would seem drab and prosaic to most young people are listened to and thought exotic by the native boys. Shower baths, new kinds of food baseball and other games are topics that never fail to interest a group of listeners. Thus, they are impressed and plan for the days when they, too, may be able to go and live through these experiences.

The moral problems of youth are not of serious concern in these native villages. Changes that have taken place in the environment of youth in other parts of the country have not filtered into the local setting. Modern entertainment and amusement is still far from the reach of local young people. Consequently, one hears little expressed remorse or regret about the changing trends of modern youth which made such popular copy elsewhere. True an opinion regarding the immorality of city youth is frequently heard but the city has long been regarded as more corrupt than the rural areas.

All the adults of El Cerrito appreciate the superior environment for their young people, especially for the girls. "This is a good place to rear a girl. She is not exposed to the temptations of the city." Many of the people point to the record of the village in youth delinquency. "We never have any crime problems to deal with here." The general opinion is that such a record is the result of the training received by the children in the home and in the church.

Value System and Its Supporting Sanctions and Attitudes

The entire set of values by which the native people live are woven around the family and the family group. Loyalties, responsibilities, and duties are primarily connected with the meaning of family. The esteem for an individual in the community comes out of contributions or failures in relation to this institution. The primary virtues that give an individual or a family prestige in the community spring out of the need and welfare of the family group. The new values the native has learned from his contacts with the Anglo and other racial groups have been shaped and conditioned to fit into his own way of life. Hard work and thrift, which are such important factors in many cultures, have never found local adoption in puritanical form. The native has never found or sanctioned virtue in such practices. True, he has seen and realized what such practices can do and for that reason has accepted them in his own fashion. Work and thrift are valuable in accumulating material goods but carry no virtue in themselves. A child is taught that hard work and thrift may bring him security and independence but never that they will add to his moral well-being.

To be recognized as a good citizen of El Cerrito, one is expected to support not only his immediate family but to give what aid he can to parents or to any other near relative in need. Failure to do this brings social censure in its most formidable form. Living in accordance with this responsibility brings respect of the highest order. This custom is taken for granted and is probably never mentioned.

Honesty is a virtue in strict accordance with church teaching and family sanction. This trait is greatly enhanced by the isolated and intradependent nature of the village, where cooperation and mutual aid depend heavily on such a quality for efficient

functioning. Products and even small sums of money are loaned with never a thought of failure to repay. Local trading and bartering is based upon these same ethics. A man would never dare misrepresent an article in a trade with a friend and neighbor, nor ask more than he thought was worth.

This virtue takes on a somewhat different meaning outside the local village. The code is much less rigid in dealing with town or business people. If a man owes a debt at a store in town repayment is postponed until minor liabilities in the local community have been liquidated. Outside obligations are purely business matters and are entirely devoid of the personal and primary qualities given those in the home community.

El Cerrito has little need for formal social controls. Although there is a local Justice of the Peace, his functions are other than establishing or maintaining peace and order. The county sheriff has never been called upon by the villagers. They mention only two instances in the history of the village when outside officers have had to interfere in the community.

Informal social controls govern life in El Cerrito. Although hidden they are more effective and more feared than a much more severe code administered formally would be. Group approval and sanction become tremendously important in the lives of a people living so completely within themselves.

The role of the women is much more restricted than that of the men. From very early youth a male is allowed considerable freedom. He is permitted freedom of speech and action as long as he remembers his responsibilities and his duties to old age, relatives, and the church. This is not true of the girl, who is early taught that her place is in the household. Her role in the community is definitely outlined. She must be good and associate only with her own sex. She must learn to help her mother with the household duties and eventually she must marry and have children. It is difficult for her to break out of this narrow pattern.

It is the wife who symbolizes virtue and goodness in the family. It is she who has the responsibility of setting the example for the family. She must be pure, religious, and obedient to her husband. Her complete life must be devoted to her home and to her family. All money matters and dealings with the outside world are left to the husband.

Local society is much more liberal with the male. If he supports his family, goes to church occasionally, and fulfills his obligations to the group and its institutions, he is allowed free rein in his personal affairs.

Integration and Conflict

El Cerrito is peculiar in its setting in that relatively little conflict or friction occurs between rival groups in the community. This situation is unique in the area because of the degree to which family groups often aline themselves against each other and exert tremendous effort to boost their own interests and injure others. This was once true of El Cerrito until circumstances removed the conflict from the village. The extent to which the problem was typical in El Cerrito justifies a brief summary of the story. It could easily be duplicated in many of the surrounding villages with the exception that, in the other villages, the conflict is still going on. The story is as a resident told it.

The village of El Cerrito was settled by the M's and my family. They came in almost equal numbers, just about as many M's as Q's. Both families had some money and large herds of sheep and cattle. At first there was no trouble between them. All were friends, although only one marriage ever took place between the two families. The M's used to herd their stock on the north side of the village and my people on the south side. But as the herds kept getting larger the M's began to come into our territory. At first we didn't mind so much. There was plenty of grass and we didn't want to have any trouble with the M's. They were bad people. Always getting drunk and fighting among themselves. Finally we had to tell them that they would have to stay out of our territory. This made them very angry and they began doing things to us. Sometimes they would take our calves and lambs and mark them with their brand. Things got so bad that the families would not speak. Then fights began. Finally one of the M's hit my grandfather over the head with a shovel and almost killed him. My uncle ran for the sheriff but the M's heard about it and ran after him. They finally caught him and almost beat him to death. This made my father very angry. He took his gun and shot one of the M's. He didn't die but he was in bed for a long time. There was a big trial after that which lasted for a long time. It cost both families almost all of their sheep and money. The M's were in such bad shape that they all left, and our people were never able to get back their property.

Obviously this story tells much more than the history of the conflict. It shows plainly what such conflicts have done to undermine the resources of the people, and how they have been rendered easier prey for individuals or concerns willing to take advantage of this weakness. These conflicts persist with amazing tenacity. Once they are begun no compromise seems possible.

Conflicts as they exist are almost invariably between groups rather than between individuals. This is understood only in the light of the solidarity of the group. Infringement upon the rights of the individual necessarily means interference with rights of the group, as the relationship between the group and the individual are mutual. In addition, friction between individuals within a group is made more difficult because of the threat to the interests and solidarity of the group. Undoubtedly this goes far to explain the lack of conflict and friction in the village of El Cerrito since the M families moved away.

In the individual's function in the family, in the church, and in the community are seen his integration into the local setting. It has been pointed out that his loyalties, duties, and responsibilities are much more closely tied in with the local village group than with any other unit of society. Many loyalties and virtues which the individual may practice in his own local village are not practiced in his contacts with the outside world.

This orientation to the native village is a logical outgrowth of the isolation and compactness of these native villages. During a child's formative years he is closely associated with every other child in the village. Seldom does he see the outside world or the people living in it. In case he does he is likely to consider himself and to be considered as a stranger. Until he is old enough and experienced enough to take care of himself he is seldom given the opportunity to go outside the village. He hears his parents and older brothers and sisters talk of the outside world but it is usually something far beyond his experience. Thus his only familiar world is the immediate area around him. He soon becomes accustomed to identifying himself with it.

The result of this early conditioning is carried over into adult life. To the adult who has never been far nor long away from the home village the outside still remains a strange and foreign world filled with people and affairs beyond his comprehension. He is at ease only at home, a setting he both appreciates and understands.

To his more widely traveled brother or cousin the difference in orientation remains one of degree only. His early training is neither disregarded nor forgotten. This is seen in the overt behavior of men who have lived away from the native village for long periods of time. Those who have lived away from El Cerrito for periods of a year or longer still think of themselves as belonging there. Their mailing address is never changed and all return home to vote. This attitude is also expressed by residents of the towns where some of the El Cerrito people are at present living. People of Las Vegas are always alert to correct any implication that a family from El Cerrito is now living in Las Vegas. "No, he lives in El Cerrito and always has. He is merely here for the time being working or waiting to be certified."

All the relationships between the people of a native village are of a primary nature. One would never think of asking a neighbor, friend, or relative for more than his word to bind a contract. Money is borrowed and food loaned with no more record than the memories of the parties to the act. A family would feel deeply hurt to know that a neighbor was keeping a written record of their exchanges of food and other materials. To ask for the repayment of such a loan would be an equally bad breach of local etiquette and a blow to pride. Such a request would bring immediate repayment and probably an end to such future reciprocities. It would also bring censure from local womenfolk for so bold an act as to question a neighbor's honesty to the extent of asking for repayment.

As stated previously, the exchange of tools, equipment, and livestock is made on an equally informal basis. A man may borrow a plow for an indefinite length of time with no thought of returning it when the job for which it was borrowed was completed. It matters little who has it or for how long if the owner knows that it is still within the community.

Only one family in El Cerrito does not participate in the interchange of food and tools. This family is the least liked of all in the village. People speak of the members as selfish and peculiar. Children are taught the undesirability of selfishness by using this family as an example.

But this trust and informality does not extend farther than the bounds of the community or group. Dealings with a townsman, unless he is known well, are likely to be extremely formal. For a town businessman to dun a resident of El Cerrito would not be resented in the slightest. There would be none of the personal resentment that would accompany such an act within the village. Nor would the debt be so likely to be repaid. There would be none of the group censure or pressure brought to bear on the individual to pay. Transactions made through such formalized agencies as stores or banks are thought of as purely business, with little principle involved. Such agencies are regarded as existing upon their ability to drive a good bargain. The only way the native knows to cope with this is to get as much as he can and pay what he can afford.

The village of El Cerrito is not only an isolated and compact community; it is also a distinct racial and cultural group. Obviously these differences are recognized by the local people as well as the Anglo, who makes up such a large percentage of the population of all New Mexico towns. The native in San Miguel County constitutes approximately 85 percent of the population. The people in El Cerrito, as a group, have never had open conflict with other cultural groups. Completely surrounded by similar native villages, its contacts have been mainly with its own people. What it knows of

the Anglo has been learned from local men who have gone out of the State to work or from stories that have drifted down to them from other parts of the State.

Actually there is considerable appreciation of the Anglo and his culture. An Anglo family that once lived near the village is mentioned frequently and their farm practices have been adopted to a limited extent. Many stated a belief that the local village would possibly benefit from having a few progressive Anglo families near. It would facilitate their use of the English language and they could possibly learn many of the techniques which have made the Anglos so successful in their push into New Mexico. It is admitted, however, that such a situation would be dangerous. Such contacts might finally result in the Anglo getting possession of their lands, a possibility that has become actuality in many other parts of the State.

Recent opportunities for Government work have brought the rural people of San Miguel County more and more into contact with the city. Yet it is highly problematical that such increased contacts have induced more than slight change. The older people are almost as closely bound to their home village now as before the present increased opportunities for employment in the city existed. It is only the young people who have been temporarily taken completely out of the old environment that exhibit any noticeable shift in their thinking and in their desires.

The ties that bind these people to their home village are strong. Families that move to town for the duration of a period of employment still maintain homes and holdings, and being away "on a project" is considered a temporary thing. The inducements offered by the towns and cities are not sufficiently appreciated by the majority of the families to compensate for the many factors that contribute to satisfactory living in the home community.

The types of contacts and associations in the city, once a rural family has moved there, are not especially conducive to the widening of a gap between such families and their original rural environment. Most native families in Las Vegas are still essentially small villagers. Many are transient in the sense that they have come in for temporary work with little thought of remaining permanently. Thus contacts are still mainly with people who have a definite rural background and the limited perspective that is a concomitant of life in one of the native villages. As a result of this the influence of what might be designated as the urban way of life is of much less real significance than might at first glance be imagined.

The rural people do not feel that the townsmen, as such, are in any way set apart or different from themselves. The reason for this is partly accounted for by the fact that there is actually little difference between their living conditions and those of the majority of the natives of Las Vegas, whose housing, sanitation facilities and household conveniences are in no way superior to those found in rural areas. Another significant factor is the degree of blood relationship existing between rural and urban families. This interrelationship obviously minimizes any feeling of difference between the two groups. By far the greater part of any feeling of difference between the two groups is on the side of the townspeople, who sometimes recognize the rustic side of their rural relatives and friends.

The feeling of difference is apparently in direct proportion to the number of years an urban family has lived in town, as well as the degree of financial success the family has attained in the new environment. Families which have lived in Las Vegas for

a decade or more usually speak freely of the backwardness and provincialism of the rural villages. Often one may hear the criticism that the rural people are not able to speak English effectively and as a consequence are seriously handicapped in their contacts and business relations in town. The more acculturated ones are sometimes bitter toward the rural people, believing that their backwardness is affecting adversely the entire native population. Such critics often offer the additional opinion that the social distance between rural and town people is increasing. They base their statements on the fact that the town people are making needed adjustments while the rural people are remaining in a more or less static condition. The chief factor operating to widen the gap is the schools. An ever increasing number of the native young people of Las Vegas are attending the High School and the local college thus far outstripping their friends and relatives in the village who grow to adulthood with little more formal education than that which enables them to read and write. But the importance of rural urban differences is easily overemphasized.

Many of the town businessmen are definitely antagonistic to any effort that tends toward further breakdown of village and town differences. The most outspoken of these are the businessmen whose stores are primarily dependent for trade upon the rural people. One of these men was frank enough to say that so long as he had a good country trade he was not particularly interested in a large town clientele. Country trade is conducted upon a personal rather than upon a strictly business basis. The majority of my customers trade here because they like me. I can get and hold the trade of these people even if my prices are higher than at some of the other stores. This man is convinced that recent education in consumer buying, distributed by the various Governmental agencies, has already affected the volume of his trade.

It seems fairly evident that town stores catering almost exclusively to rural trade have suffered a definite decline in volume of business done during recent years. This trade, as indicated by the storekeeper, is upon a personal basis and has been increasingly difficult to maintain. The native's feeling of obligation to trade at a store is based somewhat upon the courtesy received there which, essentially, means credit. For a store to refuse a certain amount of credit to a customer would mean that no more trade from that source could be expected. To invite overindulgence in credit would be equally disastrous. As the storekeeper quoted above expressed, "you must always keep them owing a little bit but never too much. No credit or too large an account will likely mean the loss of a customer." Thus it is always a delicate task to maintain the proper balance. This has been increasingly difficult during the last decade as credit has been needed by the villagers as never before and the likelihood of repayment has decreased at an equal rate. A number of the town business places have had to close their doors because of this pressure for credit purchases and the small volume of business done in cash. Employment on Government projects has enabled such business to return to somewhat near its old volume.

Mail-order houses have taken an ever increasing volume of the town's business. Poor means of transportation to and from town has made for increased use of the mails for buying goods that may be had at reasonable prices with little more expenditure of effort than going to the nearby post office. Recent emphasis upon time payment has greatly accelerated the use of the mail-order houses.* Farm equipment, furniture, and clothing are bought on terms requiring payments of no more than a dollar a month. Such terms are proving popular with people operating on cash incomes that are seldom, in times of employment, greater than $40 or $50 a month.

It seems likely, however, that the bulk of the trading will continue to be done in the towns. Better goods at cheaper prices and the inducements that go with extended payments are not enough to outweigh entirely the advantages of trading in town. Although the desire to make certain purchases may be the expressed reason for going to town, there are others. Going to town is, and will continue to be, an activity that is enjoyed apart from the economic function. It is also an opportunity to visit friends and relatives, a chance to keep in touch with what is happening in the outside world.

Communication and Transportation

Modern means of communication and transportation have had little effect upon the number and variety of contacts of these local people with the outside world. There has never been a telephone in the village, and the closest one to the village now is at another village, 16 miles distant by car or 23 miles by foot. The few families who own automobiles are limited in their use by the fact that operating expenses are almost prohibitive and can seldom be afforded unless a group can be gotten together to share them. The automobiles in the village are all antiquated, untrustworthy, and incapable of making more than infrequent trips to town. All repair work is done at home. A lost or broken part is usually replaced by some make-shift or home-made device. After a number of such repair jobs it is almost incredible that some of these cars run at all. One of the local men who had lost his gasoline tank tied a gallon oil can to the side of the hood of the car just high enough to allow the gas to run by means of a small pipe into the carburetor.

Newspapers and periodicals are as foreign to the village of El Cerrito as they were 50 years ago. Three copies of the county paper and two religious newspapers come regularly into the village. These papers are printed in Spanish, and are read for political news and any light that might be thrown upon relief or Governmental programs.

There are no subscriptions to magazines or periodicals. None of the people know of farm journals or other printed matter that touches upon the problems of the farmer. The most extensive reading materials are the weekly comic strips that are saved by the townspeople and distributed to their rural friends and relatives when they come to town.

The village has two radios that function when the owners can buy batteries for them. There is little interest in the educational and extension service material that is distributed by this means. Programs coming from Latin American stations are appreciated most because they can be understood more easily. One of the families listens to many of the news broadcasts and claims that only a few of the other residents are at all interested in such items. The news items listened to pertain to this country. There is too little knowledge of South American Countries to allow any degree of appreciation and understanding.

Few of the older village people ever attend a motion picture. This is not because of lack of interest or because such means of amusement are not deemed good. Actually, some of the better-to-do native town residents visit the local movie house and are especially interested in the Spanish pictures shown 2 days each week. Lack of attendance on the part of the villager is simply a matter of cost, an item that only few feel that they can afford. The young people are intensely interested in movies and can talk for days about one if they have had an opportunity to see it. But it is seldom that they can go unless the picture is on Saturday afternoon when the matinee price is reduced to 10 cents.

Value Systems and Attitudes Toward
Wider Economic and Political Problems

The people of El Cerrito have had no first-hand experience with organized labor movements. Their knowledge of such movements is limited to information picked up from random conversation. Only one of the men has ever been involved in a strike. The incident happened in Colorado. A group of sugar beet workers planned a strike against this man's employer. When he heard about the strike he chose to leave rather than become involved in it.

The background and experience of these people precludes any sanction or understanding of labor movements. They have never been members of an active pressure group. There is a clear recognition of the rights of private property and the lack of right of the laborer to interfere with production. It is universally agreed here that it is morally wrong for a worker or group of workers to use such means as strikes to force a higher wage or shorter working hours. The concensus is that labor is strictly a commodity, to be bought at the discretion of the employer and at a price that he feels he is able to pay. Any interference with this right is likely to operate to the disadvantage of both employer and employee.

This attitude has undoubtedly been partly the result of the type of labor engaged in. The villager searches for work where there is a definite demand and after the season or peak period of the work is over he returns home to wait for another similar opportunity. The source of their work has never been constant. During one season of the year they may be in Kansas and in another as far away as Wyoming. Even the type of work has varied from agricultural labor to various types of industrial employment. The laborer is always ready to take almost any work he can get.

For example, Benny Sanchez is 24 years of age. He has spent 3 years in a CCC camp, 3 different summers in Colorado, 1 in Texas and 1 in Wyoming. The types of work he has done in these various States range from firing a boiler in a smelter plant in Colorado to picking cotton in Texas. Unless he is fortunate enough to find a job with some permanency in the meantime, he plans to make a circle of all the surrounding States next year to survey all possible sources of employment for the local people.

Almost the entire life of an individual is lived in one of these rural villages. The influence of experience outside the local area is negligible. The wider world in which many of them have traveled is still foreign because of the way in which they have kept themselves apart from it. National policies and politics, foreign and international trade agreements, even the new defense program, except as the draft affects their own people are felt to be the concern of the outside. Politics and party platforms stimulate little interest or attention until they come into the local scene. Knowledge of candidates and public offices is limited to the local situation, with the exception of the President of the United States. To these people the President is a combination of the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of the Federal Government.

Few events in the rural communities occasion more interest than the election of county officials. Candidates are elected mainly upon the basis of what they may be expected to get in the way of material benefit for the voter. All other qualifications are secondary. Appropriations for programs of work or other benefits to the people are never judged in terms of the Federal Government. Blame for the reduction of funds for work relief or other benefits, is always placed at the feet of local officials. Any reduction in benefits is considered to be the result of the failure of the local officials in their duty to the people.

INTEGRATION AND DISINTEGRATION IN COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL LIFE

It is generally agreed among those people, whose work brings them into contact with rural life, that rural people and rural communities are undergoing change. Techniques and technologies of the last few decades have eradicated many of the barriers that once separated rural and urban people. Rural urban adjustments vary with the different cultural areas of the Nation. Factors or characteristics that are conducive to change and adjustment or that prove barriers to it present interesting and important data for study.

The village of El Cerrito is a singular example of a group of people that has maintained its individuality in the face of the ever increasing forces that have been brought to bear upon it. Not only has it failed to keep in step with modern technological progress but it has managed to exist in its own way after the greater part of its economic base had been lost. In this respect as well as in many others it is highly representative of a large number of other native villages that lie in the area of the Pecos watershed. Definitely submarginal to date in its capacity to support the present population it is highly integrated and unified socially. functioning in many instances as a single unit.

At the time of settlement the village was completely surrounded by grass land that was adequate for the support of enough sheep and cattle to afford both owner and laborer an independent livelihood. At that time the community was almost a complete and independent socio-economic unit Its only dependence upon the outside world was for a market for its wool and to supply certain material items that were not produced or made at home.

The destruction of this pattern has been both recent and rapid During the last quarter century surrounding land has been leased bought and homesteaded literally to the doors of the village. But, despite this loss the population of the village has remained almost constant. Loss of local resources failed to disturb the village or its people while a substantial wage could be earned in outside employment Many of the sources of work in surrounding States paid a much higher wage than could be earned locally. It was only after this resource also gave way that continued existence of the old way of life threatened to go with it

It has been only during the last 10 years or less that the solidarity of the village has shown definite signs of cracking Not until reserves had been liquidated and many months of unemployment had ensued did the families begin to wonder whether the old way of life had not been doomed.

Work relief programs initiated by the Federal Government are proving influential in breaking down some of the compactness of the local rural communities. The influence of such programs is functioning in two major ways: (1) In the influence upon the older members of the community who are depending heavily upon relief work to live; (2) and perhaps most significantly, in the influence upon the younger people who are taken completely away from the village for varying periods of time into the CCC and NYA camps.

Work on relief projects is drawing many natives to the towns. Although the majority move to town with no intention of remaining permanently, there are many inducements for them to stay. When in town they are in close touch with the programs and are readily available for work in case a new project is begun. Many believe that town residents are given preference in certification for work.

The effect of a young person's stay of a few years in the CCC or NYA camp is profound. Such persons have a difficult time of readjustment if they return to their native village. They become accustomed to an entirely new way of life which they consider, in most respects, superior to the old. They become conditioned to better housing facilities, new and varied social contacts, new sources of amusement and recreation. Above all, perhaps, they become accustomed to having a certain amount of cash to spend as they see fit.

But these inducements to move out of the rural villages do not operate without opposition. There are strong inducements to remain. That these counter forces are powerful in the lives of the people is evident. Under a different or weaker set of integrating factors the village would likely have disintegrated long ago.

Perhaps the most instrumental element in holding the community together has been the institution of the family. In the native villages the term "family" has wide yet definite connotations. As indicated graphically in chapter IV, it means considerably more than parents and offspring. Structurally it embraces grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, and sometimes many cousins. The units of this group are often located upon a single or upon contiguous tracts of land, with the houses together or adjoining. Although each biological family unit may operate a tract of land somewhat delineated there is still a substantial pooling of labor and division of crops. Such a group receives recognition, both social and economic, within and outside the village. Misfortune to an individual may bring support and contributions from all others in the group. Obligations and responsibilities to the family are well defined and universally accepted.

It is obviously difficult for a member to break away from a web of relationships so intricately and strongly woven. Abandoning this social and economic unit means mutual loss. The strength of the family is weakened by the loss of a member and the individual is forced to function in an atmosphere of independence that is entirely unfamiliar. Realization of this, on the part of the member, makes it difficult to sacrifice the relationship.

The church is another institution that exerts a strong influence in the integration and stability of the native villages. The native is usually a devout Catholic and is loyal to church and priest. The people take marked interest in all church activities. Most of the services are held in the absence of the priest, who holds mass once each

month in the local church. These services are held regularly and with good attendance. Few choose to evoke the displeasure of God and fellow for the privilege of remaining away. Thus, the integration of the individual into the church affords another barrier to disintegration. Other churches in other towns or villages are never quite the same. Attendance at church away from the village is never done with the same regularity or an equal degree of fervor.

The church "functions" afford a rare means for social expression. Such functions serve the dual purpose of entertainment for the people and an opportunity to pay homage to the church and its saints. The celebration in honor of the patron saint of the village is an occasion that only the rarest of circumstances will justify missing. Although not as religiously important as Holy Week it offers the additional advantage of combining entertainment with worship. In addition to the prospect of a good time each person feels a responsibility and obligation to be present and to participate in this annual event.

In addition to a sense of responsibility to and integration in the family group and the church, the individual is conscious of his role as a member of the community as a whole. The sense of belonging to a community is developed in a native child to the extent that it is difficult ever to feel apart from it. This is seen in the individual's feeling of identity with his community as well as in the attitudes of others. Residents of rural villages are especially aware of an expected loyalty to their village. There is never any confusion as to which village a native belongs, and the interests of the village are as clearly recognized in distinction to those of any other.

Perhaps no factor is more important in binding a native to the home village than the privilege of living and associating with his own people. They are at ease only among their own people, who understand them and with whom they can converse in their own language. This is especially true of those who have little mastery of the English language. Such people are strangers in many areas of their home State where the Anglo-Americans have largely displaced the natives. They are never able to feel a part of the culture of the people of the many areas over which they wander working and in search of work. Appreciation and freedom in the home village has compensated for greater material benefits, even economic stability, that might have been possible elsewhere. Those people in El Cerrito who gave reasons for preferring the village as a place to live invariably mentioned the fact that the local people were similar as to race, customs, and language. Those who expressed a dislike for life elsewhere always mentioned the many discomforts of living outside their own environment.

The families that are now considering a break away from El Cerrito recognize fully the extent of such a sacrifice. One of the men who plans to leave permanently, if there happens to be an opportunity, said: "It isn't that I want to leave. It's a matter of making a living. I used to go to Colorado each year to work in the beets but I always came back. If I go to Colorado to live I know that my wife and children won't like it. My wife gets homesick for this place if she is away for a week. There is nothing else for me to do. I have been out of work for 4 months. All the income I have is from the rent of a room to the school teacher. That isn't enough to buy our food. So, even if we don't want to leave, we will have to if I ever have a chance at anything like a good job again."